

NEW IMAGE FOR THE BAD BOY OF FORMULA 1
Schumacher gets back on track



NOT FUNNY, SAY TINA AND HARRY
Why New York's golden pair are suing



LIAM HAS TO TAKE IT ON THE NOSE
Oasis star on assault charge



TROUBLED WATER FOR PAUL SIMON
His new musical hits the rocks



THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 7 March 1998 70p No 3,552

Prescott slaps an extra tax on rail tycoons

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

JOHN PRESCOTT, the Deputy Prime Minister, is planning "profit-sharing" deals with private train companies to claw back money for the public purse. Despite denials of a "windfall tax" by both Downing Street and Mr Prescott, Whitehall sources made it clear that if train firms come to ask for longer franchise lengths, or propose a takeover, then ministers will ask for a share of any future profits. Mr Prescott is extremely concerned about gains made on the back of railway privatisation. He saw seven directors of Great Western - one of the first train companies to fall into private hands - make more than £15m in profits. Earlier this week, the National Audit Office also attacked the speed of the sell-off of the nation's rolling stock companies, which netted the public purse £1.8bn but were then sold on for £2.6bn plus. One railway manager alone made £33m on a deal with Stagecoach, the bus giant. However, sources close to Mr Prescott said that since no action could be made retrospectively, this measure was not a "windfall tax". His junior cabinet colleague Gavin Strang found himself at the centre of a political storm when he floated the idea on a BBC programme. "What is likely is, if a train company seeks, say, an extension to its licence, we will be asking what benefits are there for the passenger and the public purse," a source said. Mr Prescott himself referred obliquely to the plans in a radio interview. However, he said he "wouldn't be so sure" that similar deals would now follow, to meet new rules. He pointed to the profit-sharing arrangement he had negotiated with regard to the Channel Tunnel. "Clearly

I will be considering what powers I have to get the taxpayers' share in these matters, but we don't think the windfall tax is the way of doing it." New powers to stop profiteering were first proposed by the former franchising director, when starting to sell off British Rail. He asked ministers for a claw-back option to retrieve excess profits - but Tory ministers were concerned that this would hamper BR's sell-off and "knocked the suggestion back". It is also understood that the performance of John O'Brien, the present franchising director, has been called into question. Mr Prescott believes that Mr O'Brien, whose contract expires later this year, could have squeezed more from the £140m Great Western deal. The ability to claw back profits is likely to feature in the forthcoming White Paper on transport. Mr Prescott added that ways to make the railway system more accountable were being considered. "I'm obviously looking at these matters as to exactly what my powers are in these areas... And the Franchise Director and the Regulator have made clear to me they don't have adequate powers. That's what I'm addressing myself to in the White Paper." However, he stressed: "We're not introducing another windfall tax. There's no doubt about that. We want to see how we get a greater accountability into this railway system to stop what I believe might be a market practice [that is] subsidised by... the taxpayer." "What I made clear to the Franchise Director was that I, like most other people, feel this privatised railway system turns people into millionaires at the expense of the passenger and the taxpayer. That's totally unacceptable." Bosses cash in, page 6

Charles finds a bosom pal at the opera



The Prince of Wales meets Isabelle Vernet, who plays Vitellia in the Welsh National Opera production of *La Clemenza di Tito*. The Prince attended the gala performance in London as patron of the WNO. Photograph: Matthew Dickens

Murdoch settles with Patten in book censorship fiasco

By Steve Boggan

RUPERT MURDOCH last night apologised to Chris Patten, the former Hong Kong governor, and paid thousands of pounds in compensation in the dispute over his book dumped by HarperCollins. HarperCollins have "unreservedly apologised" for and withdrawn any suggestion that Mr Patten's book *East and West* was rejected for not being up to proper professional standards or being "too boring", added a statement from the publishers. The HarperCollins executives accused by Rupert Murdoch of "screwing up" in the débâcle over the book by Chris Patten, were yesterday given a vote of confidence by the media tycoon. In a statement issued when HarperCollins insiders were expecting sackings and resignations, Mr Murdoch praised his London team's "professionalism, experience and determination". Only a day earlier, Anthea Disney, Mr Murdoch's New York-based "corporate assassin", had flown into town amid expectations that heads would roll over the handling of his decision to drop Mr Patten's book, *East and West*, because of its criticism of China. One HarperCollins source said that staff were expecting "blood on the carpets". However, following talks between Ms Disney, chairwoman of News America publishing, parent company of HarperCollins, and

Eddie Bell, the company chairman, not a drop of blood was spilled. "There are no winners or losers in the current controversy," said Mr Murdoch, who many would argue has emerged from the fiasco as a loser. "Mistakes have been made and we all share the responsibility." "I have total confidence in the proven talents and abilities of Eddie Bell and the entire publishing team. Eddie, Adrian Bourne [managing director] and Adrian Laing [head of legal affairs] in particular have had a difficult few days, but I know that their professionalism, experience and, above all, their determination will take the company successfully forward." Mr Bell made no comment after the statement was issued but staff at HarperCollins were told he would be making a longer statement of his own on Monday. It is understood Ms Disney told executives that Mr Patten's claim for breach of contract would be settled out of court. That comes as no surprise given comments made by Mr Murdoch in his *Times* newspaper on Tuesday. "I did not tell people to try and censor the book or invent excuses not to do it," he said. "I said: Why don't you go and say we would rather have someone else publish this and if there is any chance of losing money we will make good." Insiders said staff were surprised that there were no resignations or sackings and they still felt uneasy about the future.

Court fire dashes hope for Louise

By Jason Bennett



IT WAS never going to be a straightforward conclusion to what has become one of the most extraordinary court cases ever. According to the script editors it was supposed to be the day that the British au pair Louise Woodward began an appeal hearing that would decide whether she walked free or was sent back to jail for killing baby Matthew Eappen. Television crews and excited news editors had prepared themselves for an hour of impassioned speeches, tearful relatives and rabble-raising from supporters back in Britain. Court 13 of the Supreme Judicial Court in Boston, Massachusetts, was packed six minutes before the appeal was due to begin. Moments earlier Woodward, 20, had arrived through a throng of camera crews and TV reporters. The drama, however, came from an unexpected source. Five minutes before the start, fire alarms and flashing lights were activated. Hundreds of people were ushered out and commentators started speculating about a bomb threat. Firefighters started rushing into the building. They found that an electrical transformer in the basement of the 15-storey building had caught fire. Emergency services said later that at least five people had been taken to hospital after an explosion and a fire in the electrical vault area of the building. One man, a maintenance worker, was suffering from

Louise Woodward: appeal must wait until Monday. Burns and four others, including court officers and one prisoner, were suffering from the effects of smoke. The cause of the fire was not known but firefighters said it was accidental. Meanwhile the officials in court 13 announced that the hearing would be postponed until Monday. Woodward is believed to have left the building almost immediately. The two legal teams had intended to present their 25-minute arguments to back up lengthy written submissions already handed in to the seven Supreme Court justices. Both prosecution and defence are appealing against her manslaughter conviction for the killing of the baby while she was caring for him. The prosecution is to ask for the jury's second degree murder verdict to be reinstated and a life sentence imposed, with no possibility of parole for 15 years. The defence is seeking a quashing of all convictions.

Friends for life; even in death not far apart

By David McKitterick

TWO FRIENDS gunned down by loyalist renegades - Damien O'Donoghue, a Catholic, and Philip O'Donoghue, a Protestant - were buried yesterday in the County Armagh village of Poyntzpass, in different cemeteries. They lived not far away from each other, socialised together and died together when masked gunmen burst into their local bar last night.

Their families left two and a half hours between the ceremonies so that villagers could attend both funerals. Everybody in the village seemed to be at both. The next big event in their lives was supposed to be Philip's wedding, with Damien acting as his best man; no one ever thought they would instead be going to their graves together. Damien's service came first, at the Catholic church in Chapel Street at noon. Philip had his service in the Presbyterian church in Meeting Street, just round the corner, at 2.30pm. It rained all day, starting before Damien was buried and going on until after Philip was laid to rest. On a grey, cheerless day,

the rain was relentless and pitiless as Northern Ireland's stream of killings. In Chapel Street, the village stood in a throng as Damien's coffin was brought slowly into the church. Only the rain broke the silence as Philip's three brothers, drenched, carried the coffin of his friend on its last journey. The little church was packed so most stood outside. Some sheltered under umbrellas while others stood bareheaded, for over an hour, as the service took its course. Inside, the parish priest, Father Brian Hackett, attempted to address the killers, suggesting that peace might be on its way and that they might be. Please turn to page 2

IRAQ APPEAL

As Robert Fisk continues his harrowing investigation into the plight of Iraq's innocent children, The Independent's appeal has been flooded with donations from readers who have been touched by their plight. Yesterday we linked up with the charities Care International and Medical Aid for Iraq Children, which are already doing much to relieve poverty and distress in Iraq. They will work closely with us to ensure that your money helps bring medicines to the children who most need them. Please send cheques, made out to The Independent Iraq Fund, to PO Box No 6870, London E4 5BT.

An up and down over the Union Flag

The Diana effect lingers on. The Queen has broken with tradition and decreed that the Union flag will from now on fly full-mast from Buckingham Palace 24 hours a day - so that it can be lowered to half-mast when a member of the Royal Family dies, writes Kim Sengupta. In the past the flagpole has been left bare when the Queen was out to residence. This caused a constitutional crisis when the Princess of Wales was killed while the Queen was at Balmoral. The public and sections of the press appeared incensed that there was no flag at half-mast. "Show us you care Ma'am," ran a typical headline. Palace sources said yesterday's move shows how responsive the new, reforming Royals

are to public opinion. The decision was taken at a meeting of the advisory Way Ahead Group. Some constitutional experts detected a deeper, almost Blairite "vision thing" in the flag gesture. The historian David Starkey said: "It means that Buckingham Palace is accepted as a People's Palace". Others said it showed the Royal Family's empathy with the "new Britain". The Union flag has always flown at full-mast and around the clock at Windsor Castle and the Tower of London ever when the Queen is away. The Royal Standard is never lowered to half-mast as the Sovereign, according to protocol, never dies, the next in line immediately assuming that role.

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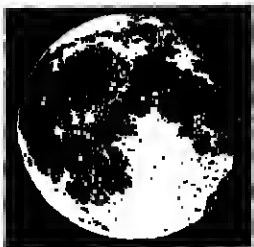
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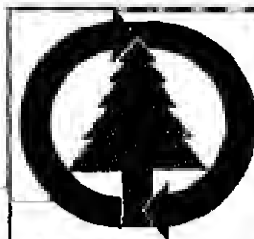
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IN THE
INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY
TOMORROW■ **Young Love**
The truth about
under age sex■ **Recipes**
from the
Riviera How
to create the
authentic
flavours of
the south■ **Living on**
the moon We
tell you how■ **Farewell**
Fags Tried and
tested: the best
ways to stop
smoking

CONTENTS

News	2-10
Foreign	11-14
Design	15
Fashion	15
Features	16
Obituaries	17
Leader & letters	18
Comment	19
Business	20-22
Shares	23
Unit trusts	24
Sport	25-28
Crossword	28
Concise X-word The Eye	10
TV & radio	The Eye, 12
Games	The Eye, 10

**NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT
RECYCLING**
Recycled paper made up 41.2% of
the raw material for UK newspapers
in the first half of 1997.

Recycled paper
made up 41.4% of the
raw material for UK
newspapers in the
first half of 1997.

Tax raids stop trusts cheating Budget

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

A DAWN swoop on hundreds of millions of pounds in offshore trusts in a pre-Budget crackdown on tax avoidance schemes yesterday raised questions about the £12m trust held by Geoffrey Robinson, the Paymaster General.

The Inland Revenue acted after a tip off that the managers of a number of millionaires' offshore trusts were planning to dodge tax measures in Gordon Brown's 17 March Budget by switching the money back to Britain and passing it to their wives or children to avoid capital gains tax.

The Treasury took the rare step of bringing forward the tax measures with immediate effect to avoid losing sums which officials said could run into "hundreds of millions of pounds".

The move will boost Mr Brown's room for raising spending in priority areas, such as health and education, but it led to questions about Mr Robinson's own offshore trust by Tory MPs.

David Heathcoat-Amory, the Tory Treasury spokesman, said he would be challenging Mr Robinson in a Commons debate next Tuesday on whether he would be affected by the change. "We want to know whether Geoffrey Robinson has already done this with his own offshore trust," said Mr Heathcoat-Amory.

The Treasury said Mr Robinson had not transferred his trust to the mainland. Mr Robinson, a close friend of Tony Blair, has been advising the Chancellor on ways of closing tax loopholes.

But the clampdown on tax avoidance has highlighted the potential embarrassment facing the Government over Mr Robinson's continuation as a Treasury minister while the Chancellor is making tax avoidance one of his Budget targets.

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Dawn Primarolo, said: "The Government is determined to stem tax leakage by detecting, deterring and countering tax avoidance."

"We will therefore take action, to be included in the next Finance Bill (which will implement the Budget), to prevent avoidance of tax by those who dispose of an interest in, or originating from, a trust which has ever been an offshore trust."

"The measure will have effect in relation to all disposals on or after today."

The exemption applied to people who had a lifetime interest in the income from older offshore trusts. They could sell their right to the income to somebody else, usually a tax-exempt offshore bank, in return for a lump sum free of capital gains tax.

For example, someone getting £50,000 a year from an offshore trust fund invested in company shares worth £1m could sell their lifetime right to the income in return for, say, £500,000 tax-free.

In the budget, the Chancellor is expected to introduce a new starting rate of a 10p tax for the low paid to encourage more into work, but there could be more means testing of benefits. Treasury ministers have been considering taxing child benefit for the better off.

Mr Brown yesterday told a fringe meeting at his party's Perth conference he was discussing extending the "New Deal" proposals to the most run-down estates.

The Chancellor told a fringe meeting at Labour's Scottish conference: "Up and down the country there are estates where not only large numbers are unemployed, but where there are no businesses, no industry, in some cases no shops, no banks, and where the amenities and facilities necessary to build a successful community are not there."

Some estates had unemployment rates three or four times as high as the national average, high truancy, and few opportunities for training or further education, he said. "Unless we begin to tackle these problems we will not be able to say we have genuinely found a solution to tackle the problems of poverty and unemployment."

Mother drowned baby after splitting from lesbian partner

A MOTHER who drowned her baby son when she split up from her lesbian partner, was yesterday ordered to be detained in a psychiatric hospital.

Cardiff Crown Court was told how Carol Stokes, 32, became pregnant by a male friend

after she and her lover, Colleen O'Neill, decided they wanted a child together. But she allegedly drowned 16-month-old Lewis in a bath just a week after Miss O'Neill walked out on her.

Stokes, of Adamsdown, Cardiff pleaded not guilty to

murder but guilty to manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility.

Leighton Davies QC, for the prosecution, said: "These are tragic and bizarre circumstances. In 1994, she met and formed a relationship with Colleen

O'Neill and they began living together. A year later they decided they wanted a child and Stokes became pregnant by a male friend. During the pregnancy, but particularly after the birth, she suffered post-natal depression. She had even tried to

electrocute Lewis and herself in the bath, but had failed."

Stokes carried out her threat a week after Miss O'Neill told her she was leaving.

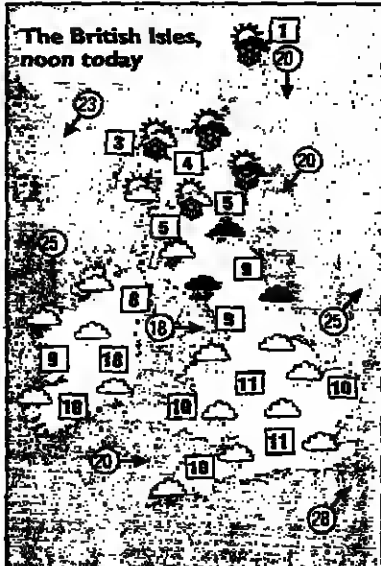
Mr Davies said: "In the months leading up to the death she sought help and was seen by

psychiatrists and social services on several occasions. She openly expressed urges that she wanted to kill herself and her child. But nobody believed her threats were serious although Lewis was placed on the social services at risk register."

The decision was welcomed by London Underground's Spencer McManus, general manager network services, who said: "Ticket touting is an offence against which we must be taken. London Underground, in conjunction with the British Transport Police, pursues these cases with great care."

London Underground has £30m a year through fare evasion which includes revenue lost through ticket touting.

WEATHER

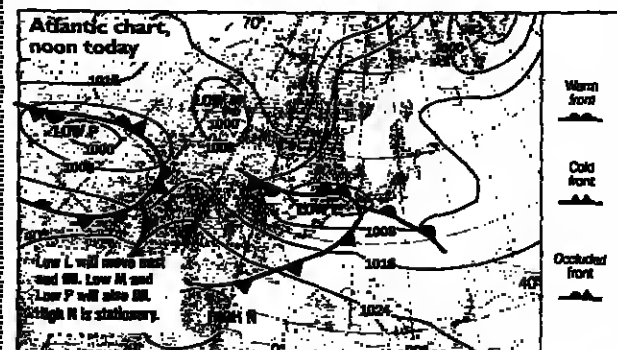


General summary and outlook: Steel and snow over Scotland will turn to rain for a while before clearing southwards later, while northern Scotland has a few snow showers. Northern Ireland and northern England will have outbreaks of rain, heavy at times. Rain will clear during the evening but not before turning to sleet and snow over the higher ground. Wales and remaining parts of England will be cloudy with light rain in places and the risk of sleet and snow over northern hills in the evening.

Scotland will stay cold for a few days with sharp overnight frosts, and snow showers in the north and east until Tuesday. The rest of the country will turn colder, too, as the winds turn mainly northerly, with eastern England seeing the odd wintry shower. Sheltered southern areas will, however, have some decent spells of sunshine. Windy showers are going to clear from most areas by midweek but rain is likely to move into western parts of the UK later.

British Isles weather

Area	Today	Tomorrow
London	11-15	12-16
Manchester	10-14	11-15
Birmingham	11-15	12-16
Cardiff	10-14	11-15
Edinburgh	9-13	10-14
Glasgow	8-12	9-13
Sheffield	10-14	11-15
Nottingham	11-15	12-16
Leeds	10-14	11-15
Belfast	9-13	10-14
London	11-15	12-16
Manchester	10-14	11-15
Birmingham	11-15	12-16
Cardiff	10-14	11-15
Edinburgh	9-13	10-14
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Sheffield	10-14	11-15
Nottingham	11-15	12-16
Leeds	10-14	11-15
Belfast	9-13	10-14



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Leeds	10-14	11-15
Belfast	9-13	10-14
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Manchester	10-14	11-15
Birmingham	11-15	12-16
Cardiff	10-14	11-15
Edinburgh	9-13	10-14
Glasgow	8-12	9-13
Sheffield	10-14	11-15
Nottingham	11-15	12-16
Leeds	10-14	11-15
Belfast	9-13	10-14

Lighting-up times

Area	Today	Tomorrow
London	16.11 to 18.57	16.12 to 18.54
Manchester	15.47 to 18.39	15.38 to 18.36
Birmingham	15.41 to 18.31	15.32 to 18.29
Cardiff	15.35 to 18.25	15.26 to 18.23
Edinburgh	15.29 to 18.19	15.20 to 18.17
Glasgow	15.23 to 18.13	15.14 to 18.11
Sheffield	15.17 to 18.07	15.08 to 18.05
Nottingham	15.11 to 18.01	15.02 to 17.59
Leeds	15.05 to 17.55	14.56 to 17.53
Belfast	14.59 to 17.49	14.50 to 17.47

Air quality

Area	Today	Tomorrow
London	Good	Good
Manchester	Good	Good
Birmingham	Good	Good
Cardiff	Good	Good
Edinburgh	Good	Good
Glasgow	Good	Good
Sheffield	Good	Good
Nottingham	Good	Good
Leeds	Good	Good
Belfast	Good	Good

AA Roadwatch

London, A1 Watford Way, Major works continue both ways between Hill Circus and Farnley Road. Until Dec 31 1998.

Greater London, A4020, Uxbridge to Ealing, Roadworks at Broomfield West. Until April 3.

A406, between Hampton Lane and Ealing Common. Major works until March 20.

A5 Kilburn Park Road, Contrail both directions for gas repairs until May 2.

A5200, York Way, Kings Cross, Roadworks at Goods Way for gas work on Maiden Lane Bridge. Until 1.

Somerset, M5 J22-23, Major works & contrail. Until April 3.

A46 Bath-Cold Ashton, Major works continue. Until July 30.

West Midlands, M5 at the M6, Birmingham (M6), Narrow lanes on M5 North due to resurfacing. Occasional overnight closures. April 17.

West Yorkshire, M62 J28-29, Roadworks to Leeds, Contrail and resurfacing. Until Dec 31 1998.

Greater Manchester, A666, Kearsley and Bales Lane, Right lane closed. 1600 - 0600 March 9.

Lancashire, M6 between J32 and J33, Roadworks at J32. Lane closure. 2 lanes only either way.

Out and about with AA Roadwatch call 0336 4871 for the latest road traffic news. Source: The AA Roadwatch. Cuts charged at 24p per min (incl 40p per min call charge) inc VAT.

Ticket touts lose appeal

THREE PEOPLE caught selling London Underground tickets and travel cards yesterday lost appeals in a case that may affect all touts, and even motorists.

In dismissing the three men's challenge to their convictions, Lord Justice Mantell in the Court of Appeal in London said: "This appeal could have implications ... even for the ordinary motorist who passes on the benefit of an unexpired parking ticket."

The judge, sitting with Mr Justice Ewbank and Judge Martin Stephens QC, said that in late 1996 the appellants - Adrian John Marshall, Robert Peter Coombes and Brian Eren - were video-recorded obtaining underground tickets and travel cards from members of the public passing through the barriers, and reselling them to other potential customers.

They had been observed and recorded as part of an operation by London Underground at Victoria station.

London Underground said it had been deprived of revenue which it might otherwise have expected to receive from the people who bought the tickets.

Lord Justice Mantell said the matter came before a judge last year. On that occasion Judge Hardy ruled that the components of the offence, dishonesty, which was a matter for the jury. In consequence, the appellants later pleaded guilty to the indictment. Mantell asked for 78 other offences, be taken into consideration. Coombes for 59 and Eren for 47. Marshall and Coombes were placed on probation. Eren was ordered to serve hours community service.

They took their case to the Court of Appeal seeking have the convictions set aside, claiming that Judge Hardy's ruling was "erroneous".

The three claimed that there was "no evidence of any intention to permanently deprive London Underground" - it had intended to return the tickets either direct to London Underground, or through a third-party buyer without res to London Underground.

But Lord Justice Mantell said: "The appellants by the pleas have acknowledged that they were acting dishonestly, seems to us that there is no reason to consider the conviction unsafe."

The decision was welcomed by London Underground's Spencer McManus, general manager network services, who said: "Ticket touting is an offence against which we must be taken. London Underground, in conjunction with the British Transport Police, pursues these cases with great care."

London Underground has £30m a year through fare evasion which includes revenue lost through ticket touting.

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Bad boy can't stop looking back in anger

IN THE NEWS

LIAM GALLAGHER

ONCE AGAIN Oasis are in the headlines, and once again it is not for their music, but for their so-called "rock'n'roll behaviour".

Only days after Noel Gallagher launched an attack on Diana, Princess of Wales, his brother Liam has been charged with assault occasioning bodily harm after allegedly head-butting a British fan and breaking his nose. Police said a 19-year-old English fan had been taking a photograph when a member of the band walked up to him, wrapped his arm around him and broke his nose.

Liam Gallagher pleaded not guilty before magistrates, and was released on bail until 9 June with the condition that he provide a \$A10,000 surety (£3,906).

It is the latest exploit from the brothers, who have been called the Kray Twins of rock, and by no means the first time that Liam has been in trouble with the police.

John Peel, the Radio 1 DJ, said yesterday that Liam should grow up. "It's old-fashioned rock'n'roll, but it's also a pain in the neck," he said. "It seems to be all right for him to behave like that because he's in a successful rock band, but if he did that in the real world he would probably get a kicking. It's really stupid behaviour."

"He should grow up, and he'd probably find he'd enjoy life a lot more if he did."

Steve Penk, of Capital Radio, said: "The guy is a thug. It's a good job he got a lucky break in a pop band, or he would certainly be in the slammer by now."

But in *Irish*, deputy editor of *Mojo* magazine, said Gallagher was simply fulfilling his job description.

"There is a tradition of the front man of a band being cocky and arrogant, and that is all he is doing."

"He is not the creative one, and when he is not actually out there performing, he is like a caged tiger. He ends up in a cycle of pent-up aggression and truculence, but one does wonder how long they can go on behaving like that and keep people interested. We must be getting close to saturation point."

Certainly Liam has always appeared to revel in his bad-boy image.

Last July he was cautioned for criminal damage after allegedly grabbing a cyclist's shirt and dragging him alongside the car in which he was a passenger. A few months later Liam was reported to have been ejected by police from a bar in Glasgow Airport, after he began ripping pages out of a book by Sir Paul McCartney.

But this tour has received more bad publicity than is usual - even for Oasis. The band was accused of unruly behaviour during the flight to Australia at the start of the tour, and narrowly escaped an airline ban.

Liam has also been accused of making advances to a young woman in Sydney. Julia Kerrigan said she planned to lodge a complaint, claiming that the singer had followed her from her hotel and had stuffed a used tissue down the front of her shirt, saying: "Here, I have something for you", before running away.

As so often happens when Oasis go on tour, the real reason for them to be there - the music - seems to disappear under an avalanche of rowdy behaviour and complaints.

Ticket sales for last night's concert were reported to be poor, and in Adelaide they attracted only 7,000 fans at £20 a ticket. A week earlier U2 had packed the stadium (capacity 12,000) at £60 a head.

It would seem that the Gallagher master-plan of becoming the "biggest rock band in the world" is in danger of collapsing unless they learn to show a little more respect to their fans.

But whatever the Gallaghers get up to, back at home their mum, Peggy, remains full of pride.

"They will always be my little boys," she says.

Kate Watson-Smyth



Liam Gallagher in Glasgow last December: 'When he is not actually out there performing, he is like a caged tiger'. Photograph: SECC

WINNING BEHAVIOUR

At the 1996 Brit Awards, Liam grabbed the gold statuette and said: "Anyone tough enough to take us off the stage can come up now." Referring to the presenter, Chris Evans, he added: "It will take more than Ginger Bolognese to throw us off."

He then turned his back on the audience, bent over and pretended to ram the award up his bottom. He sniffed the end of the statuette as he staggered off stage.

BROTHERLY LOVE

Liam's acceptance of his brother's domination - Noel refers to him only as "our kid" - has caused regular punch-ups between the two. They go days without speaking, even on tour, and Noel once broke a chair over his brother's head. "Our kid can only talk about him-



self, how many birds he's s***ged and how many cables he's thrown across the bar," said Noel.

PHILOSOPHY

"I live for now, not for what happens after I die," said Liam. "I'm going to hell, not heaven. The devil has all the good gear."

... AND XENOPHOBIA

In 1996 Liam pulled out of the band's American tour 15 minutes before the plane was due to take off, claiming he had to go house-hunting with his fiancée, Patsy Kensit (left). "We've got to be out by the weekend. I'm not going around touring the US when I've got nowhere to live. I've got to pack my gear and get a home sorted out. I can't go and look at houses while I'm in America trying to perform for silly f***ing yanks."

Bulger killers 'treated badly'

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

THE TWO boys convicted of murdering two-year-old James Bulger moved a step closer yesterday to forcing the Government to change the way it deals with children accused of serious crimes.

Jon Venables and Robert Thompson, both now 15, were granted permission to take their case to the European Court of Human Rights.

Solicitors for the youths alleged that their trial in an adult court was "inhuman and degrading" treatment and the Home Secretary, then Michael Howard, should not have been able to set their "tariff" on how long they should serve in prison.

The European Commission of Human Rights, in Strasbourg, yesterday ruled that there was substance to the youths' complaints and that it was admissible for the European Court to make judgement on it.

A ruling in favour of the boys could affect scores of children being held for serious crimes and change the system of dealing with minors.

It would also force the Government to review the system which allows Home Secretaries to decide how long children detained at Her Majesty's Pleasure should serve. However, the case is likely to take many years before it reaches court and even if it finds in favour of Venables and Thompson it would not lead to a re-trial or force the government to reduce the sentences.

Karen Bulger, James' aunt, criticised yesterday's ruling, saying: "I think it's the wrong decision. They got a fair trial. They were treated as kids, they were interviewed as kids by the police. They should stop doing this and accept their punishment."

The two boys were sentenced to serve a minimum of eight years. This was later increased to 10 years by the Lord Chief Justice and after a massive campaign led by James' mother Denise, the then Home Secretary, Michael Howard, further increased the tariff to 15 years.

This was quashed last year by the House of Lords and Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, who now has to decide on a new tariff for Thompson and Venables. Mr Straw has said that he would review their detention at the halfway stage of their sentences.

Bodyguard forbidden to talk to the press

by John Lichfield
Paris

TREVOR Rees-Jones, the sole survivor of the royal accident which killed Diana, princess of Wales, yesterday confirmed that he had regained sketchy memories of events leading up to the crash.

He told French investigators in Paris that he stood by the new details he had given to the *Mirror*, in an interview arranged by his employer, Mohamed Al Fayed, without is knowledge.

But the judge leading the inquiry made Mr Rees-Jones promise that he would give no more press interviews and that any further memories which returned would be given directly in the investigation team.

Reading between the lines, it is clear that both Judge Hervé Stéphan, and Mr Rees-Jones are unhappy with the circumstances in which the interview was conducted. The judge has summoned Mr Fayed to a meeting in Paris next week. Mr Rees-Jones asked the British embassy in Paris to make all the arrangements, including security, for his visits to the French capital yesterday. On previous visits, Mr Fayed's organisation handled these arrangements.

Asked what was the nature of his relationship with his employer, Mr Rees-Jones's lawyer, Christian Curtin, said yesterday that it was "excellent". He said Mr Rees-Jones, a professional bodyguard, "only says what he is certain about, acts entirely independently, without any pressure of any kind, and accepts the contents of the *Mirror* interview, even if he did not seek it."



Trevor Rees-Jones: Stands by details that he gave to the *Mirror*

In his comments to the *Mirror*, the bodyguard said the Mercedes containing the princess's party had been closely followed by two cars and a motorcycle before the accident six months ago which killed Diana, Mr Fayed's son Dodi, and the driver, Henri Paul. But he did not say whether or not this was immediately before the crash. He also said that Diana had been conscious just after the accident and said "Dodi".

Judge Stéphan and his investigation team are said to have lost patience with the activities of Mr Fayed, who has constantly cast doubt on the efficiency - and even the honesty - of the French inquiry. His allegations that the crash was not an accident but a plot and an assassination are dismissed by French investigators as unsupported by a shred of evidence.

Although it seems likely that the Mercedes struck another car, probably a white Fiat Uno, just before it crashed, the French investigation still regards the drunkenness of the driver, Mr Paul, a Fayed employee, as the single most important cause of the accident.

Sources close to the investigation also point out that the physical evidence suggests that the Mercedes ran into the Fiat and not the other way round.

Telephone will reveal your bank account

by Michael Harrison

A NEW telephone handset that enables subscribers to call up their bank accounts, flight arrival times and even the weather forecast on screen and at the touch of a button will be launched in Britain this autumn.

Called Easiphone, it is a combination of a conventional handset, a miniature keyboard and a six-inch screen. Users will also be able to go home shopping via a "virtual high street" guided by an voice prompts.

The handset will retail at around £150 and BT, which is developing the product in partnership with the Cheshire-based

company Bizzyline, aims to sell 1 million in the first year. By 2000, it hopes one in every five homes will have an Easiphone.

The information displayed on the screen will be "real time". Subscribers will also be able to buy a miniature plug-in printer to make a hard copy. BT is in talks with 30 content providers, ranging from banks and airports, to retailers and rail companies, to supply data.

The new telephone is the first in a range of "multi-media" products being planned by BT which could revolutionise the home. It is also developing a web phone with a built-in Internet browser which will sell initially at £499 and a new

Home Highway telephone offering home shopping, FM quality audio, video games and access to the Internet 30 times faster than analogue modems.

BT will charge up to £30 a quarter for Home Highway.

But the ultimate multi-media product will be a service providing Internet, telephony, video-conferencing, video-on demand and normal television via a single copper wire link into the home. Trials of the system, based on a technology known as asymmetric digital subscriber loop, will begin in north-west London later this year.

The traditional UK telephony market is today worth £10bn a year. But BT estimates

that by 2002 it will have been overtaken by revenues from multimedia applications such as interactive television.

Provided it gets regulatory clearance from Brussels, a consortium of BT, ESB, Midland Bank and Matsushita, will launch a new service known as British Interactive Broadcasting later this year. It will be available on both satellite and terrestrial digital television, offering everything from home shopping and banking to public service information and games.

Subscribers will be able to buy digital "cash tokens" that can be inserted into the set top box providing a certain amount of credit to play video games.

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Ex-wife denies acid attack plot to ruin husband

THE ex-wife of a businessman accused of arranging a failed nitric acid attack on her yesterday denied she had anything to do with the incident.

Susan Humphrey, 37, was recalled to give further evidence at Exeter Crown Court in the trial of her former husband, 51-year-old Peter Humphrey.

The prosecution has claimed that Humphrey did not throw the acid, but arranged the attack at his then estranged wife's home because of his obsessive jealousy over the breakdown of his nine-year marriage.

The acid thrower has not been caught.

On that night, Mrs Humphrey's babysitter, 21-year-old Beverley Hammett, was scarred for life when the acid was thrown when she answered the door of Mrs Humphrey's secluded home, called Camelot, in Scaton, Devon.

At the start of his re-examination today, defence counsel Gilbert Gray put to her: "If you want a man removed from your life, you are prepared to be dishonest, aren't you?", to which Mrs Humphrey replied: "No, I am not."

The counsel put to her that if acid was thrown at the front door Mr Humphrey - whose household products manufacturing business dealt in acid - would be in deep trouble.

Mrs Humphrey replied: "If acid was thrown at anybody's front door and anybody dealt in acid would not anybody automatically be in trouble?"

But Mr Gray suggested: "You knew that man would be put in the frame?" She replied: "I refuse to answer that. I think it is a ridiculous question."

Mrs Humphrey, who wept in the witness box at some stages of her evidence, said: "You are trying to put doubt in the jury's mind," and added: "I have told the truth totally."

Humphrey from Axminster, Devon, has pleaded not guilty to aiding and abetting a person or persons unknown to cause grievous bodily harm with intent to Mrs Humphrey on July 10, 1996.

Mr Gray put to Mrs Humphrey: "Did you have anything to do with the throwing of acid at Camelot?" - to which she replied: "I had nothing to do with the throwing of any acid."

"Have you spoken to any-

body, ever had any friends to help you?" asked counsel - "Never," she replied.

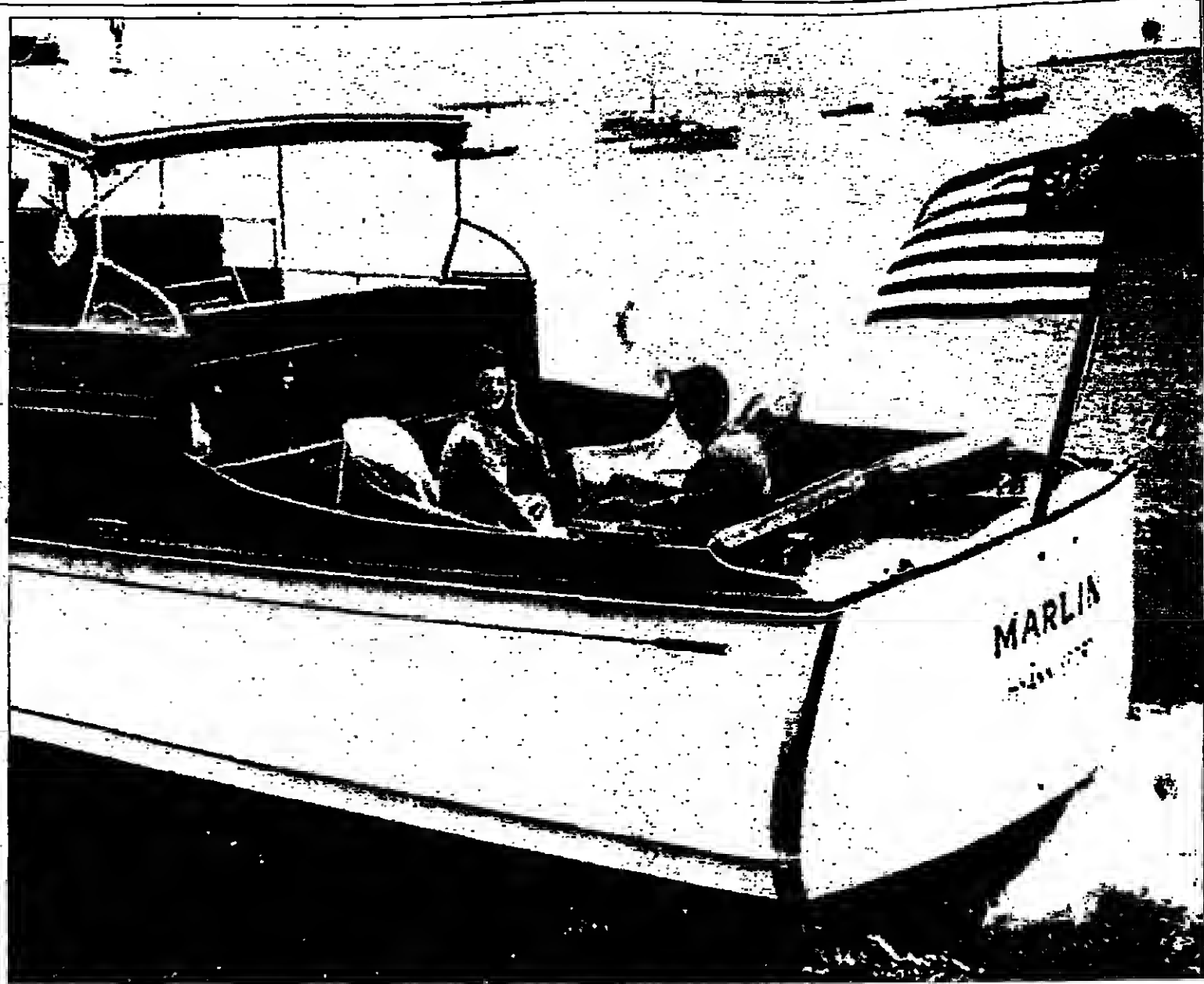
"You do not know of anybody else who might have had anything to do with it?" asked counsel - "I would not know anyone who would do such a horrendous act," said Mrs Humphrey.

On the night of the incident, the court has heard, Mrs Humphrey had gone to hospital to see her sister, while Humphrey was in a country pub with two women.

Mr Gray put it to Mrs Humphrey that in the past she had made an allegation that her first husband, 49-year-old Peter Culley, had tried to strangle her. She also told Mr Gray she did not remember another incident in which she said Mr Culley tried to strangle her after a row over a radio.

In answer to a question from Judge Graham Cottle, Mr Gray said the purpose of the cross-examination was to show making false allegations was "no novelty" to Mrs Humphrey.

The trial was adjourned until Monday, when the judge will sum up the evidence to the jury.

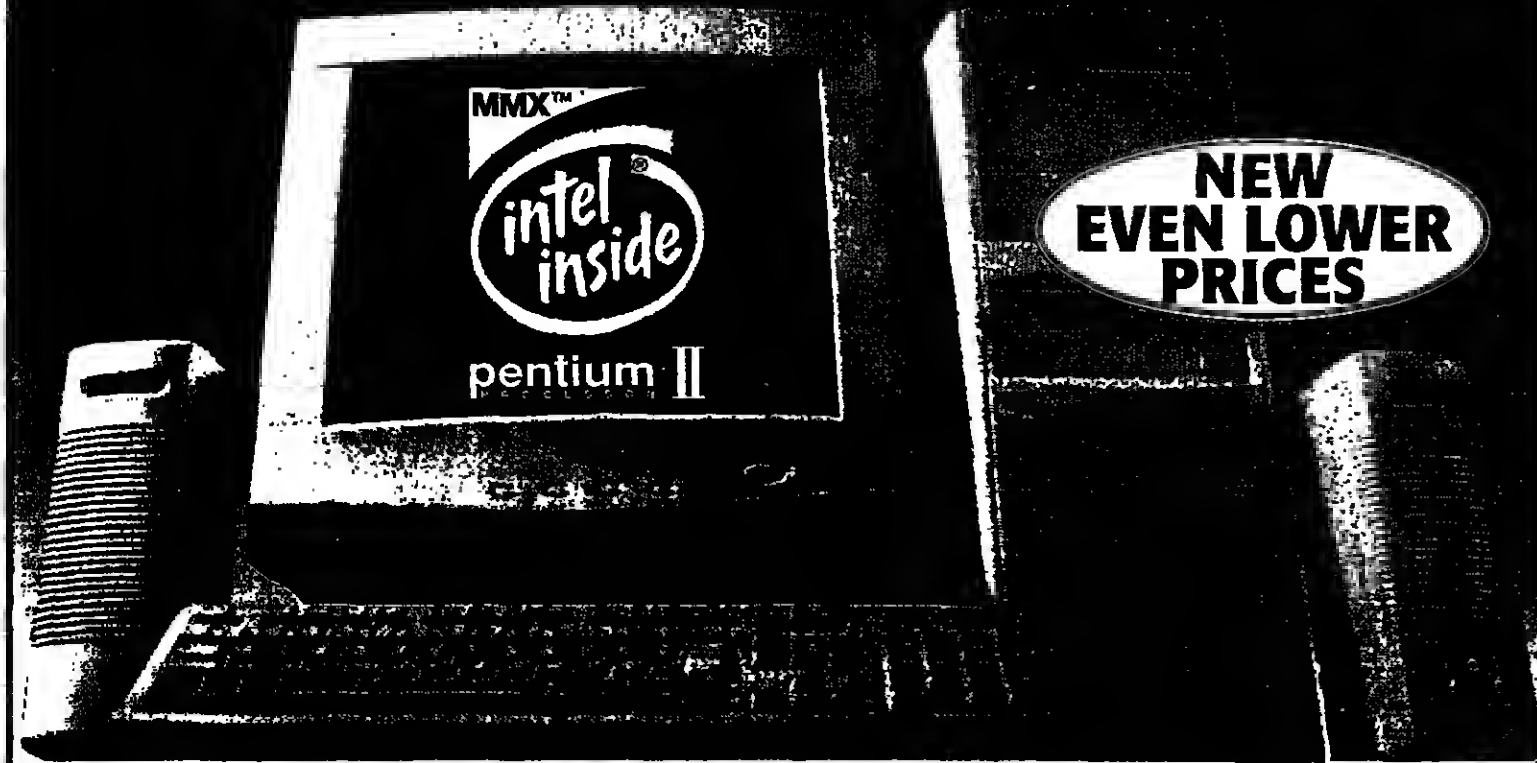


For sale: The Marlin, a 52-foot motor yacht which was the scene of glamorous trips and high-level Cold War talks by US President John F Kennedy (pictured with wife Jackie). The yacht is expected to fetch around £125,000 when it is sold by Christie's in New York next month

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Store seeks cashback after planning upset

A COUNCIL is facing a crippling compensation claim after agreed planning permission for a new superstore was overturned following a campaign by villagers.

Alnwick District Council faces a £3m claim from Safeway after it was ruled that the council was "grossly wrong" in granting permission for a superstore.

The council, in rural north Northumberland, collects only £1.5m from its 31,000 council tax payers, and has a total annual budget of £13m.

The decision by John Prescott, Secretary of State for the Environment, to refuse permission for the superstore could have wider implications on the future purchase of land with outline planning permission.

Safeway is set to claim the difference in the price of the land, on the outskirts of Alnwick, before and after the decision. Land with outline planning permission is of greater value to developers.

Mr Prescott's decision marks a victory for villagers in Alnwick. The civic society, town council and chamber of trade all opposed the store.

Peter McIlroy, of Alnwick Civic Society, said: "We have never been able to understand how the council came to be wriggling on this particular hook."

"Alnwick is a market town, a Safeway superstore would have destroyed the town centre - quite the contrary."

The council may face a compensation claim - but this will be peanuts compared to the cost if the town centre closed down.

The ruling reads: "The council was grossly wrong to grant permission when the clear evidence was, and is, that it would adversely affect the vitality and viability of Alnwick town centre."

Alnwick District Council's chief executive, Lawrie St Ruth, said: "I'm astonished with this decision. Why Alnwick has been singled out by the Government for this rare used and heavy-handed interference defies comprehension. Any compensation claim would not affect services, he added. The council is to take legal advice on a possible challenge to the decision.

A Safeway spokesman said: "We are very disappointed with this decision. We do not accept that the store would have had a negative effect on the town centre - quite the contrary."

"This store would have prevented the leakage of trade away from Alnwick. In the long term, Alnwick will continue to decline."

"We will be seeking compensation from the council. We paid a price which reflected the outline planning consent."

"This has severe implications when purchasing land planning consent is now not the concrete base it once was."

"Contracts may now have to have a revocation clause in them."

Policeman's attacker Inquiry ordered into sentenced to 21 years RUC assault charge

A ROBBER who left a policeman with brain damage after beating him about the head with a hammer, was jailed for 21 years at the Old Bailey yesterday.

PC Andrew MacDonald, 31, was praised by Judge Michael Coombe for tackling Gary Lawrence, 25, when he saw him robbing a petrol station in Woolwich, south London. The police officer's skull and arm were fractured, he spent three months in a wheelchair and has been unable to return to work since the assault eight months ago. After the "violent struggle" Lawrence, from Deptford, south-east London, was found hiding in an alley. He was found guilty of robbery and causing grievous bodily harm, jailed for six years for the robbery and 15 years, to run consecutively, for the GBH.

A SENIOR Scottish police officer is to head a new investigation into allegations of assault by RUC men on a terrorist cousin of Sinn Féin's leader Gerry Adams.

David Adams, 39, was awarded £30,000 damages after he was left badly beaten as police men foiled an IRA ambush of a top detective in east Belfast four years ago. He was later sentenced to 25 years for his part in a murder conspiracy which he denied. At the time of his arrest he suffered a broken leg, two fractured ribs, a fractured lung and multiple cuts and bruises.

The Independent Commission for Police Complaints in Northern Ireland said yesterday that Strathclyde's Assistant Chief Constable Jim Orr would carry out an internal inquiry into alleged RUC misconduct.

River flood alerts

FLOOD alerts were issued in Wales last night after a second day of torrential rain. Top priority Red warnings were issued to householders near four South Wales rivers - the Ely in Cardiff, Ewenny at Pencoed, and Ogmore and Llynfi at Bridgend and Maesteg. Flooding also hit Machynlleth and Blaenau Ffestiniog in North Wales.

Mars chance

A BOOKMAKER cut odds for an astronaut landing on Mars before 2020 by three-quarters after NASA's announced water had been found on the Moon. William Hill said it reduced odds from 200-1 to 50-1. The discovery of water paves the way for permanent lunar bases and the Moon to be used as a staging post to other planets.

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A windswept farewell to a comic genius

HUNDREDS of mourning fans, television and showbusiness stars, and Ireland's President Mary McAleese braved lashing rain to bid final farewells to Ireland's favourite wit, Dermot Morgan, star of the *Father Ted* television comedy, who died after a suspected heart attack at his London home last Saturday, writes Alan Murdoch.

St Theresa's Church in Mount Merrion, south Dublin was packed to hear his friend Father Michael Paul Gallagher say that "thousands are feeling the loss of a personal friend, though they never knew him". Ireland had "lost a comic genius," who was widely loved.

Morgan, 45, was best known in Britain for his role as the genial rogue Ted Crilly in the Channel 4 sitcom, banished to a small island with two other priests.

His former wife, Susanne, and their two sons Donagh, 19, and Robert, 16, were present as were his partner of the last 11 years, Fiona Clarke, and their son, Ben, three.



The singer Chris de Burgh and his wife, Diane, at St Theresa's in Dublin for the funeral of actor Dermot Morgan yesterday

Photograph: PA

Rail bosses cash in on privatised gravy train

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

RAILWAY privatisation produced a new set of millionaires yesterday after Britain's biggest bus company got the green light to purchase one of the nation's high-speed train services.

Seven rail executives will share profits of more than £15m - a rise of 7,000 per cent on their initial investment - after the buy-up by the bus giant FirstGroup of Great Western Holdings, which runs services from London to Wales and the South-west and trains in the North-west.

The deal angered local passenger groups and rail campaigners who point out nearly 20 per cent of trains run late on the company's flagship Great Western service.

John O'Brien, the franchising director, approved the deal but only after he secured a "£75m package of benefits" for users of the new FirstGroup train company. On Great Western, £32m worth of new trains will be ordered to be in service by June 2002, and all season-ticket holders will get a week's free travel.

In addition, there will be fines for trains running late - £250 for 20 minutes late, £500 for 30 minutes late and £1,000 if cancelled altogether. However, Trevor Smallwood, FirstGroup's chairman, said this would only cost the company £1m.

On North Western - a commuter network centred on Liverpool - £1m will be spent on additional passenger benefits and on Great Eastern - already owned by FirstGroup - all 96 slam-door trains will be phased out by the end of 2002.

Despite the extra cost for the

deal, FirstGroup say it is a good investment. The two companies are receiving more than £200m in public subsidy this year and Mr Smallwood said Great Western Holdings would make "not less than £25m" profit.

John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, was "not happy" with the arrangement. But the last government's regulatory powers left Mr Prescott with little alternative. "I don't have the power to block the deal," he added.

With a White Paper on this summer, the Deputy Prime Minister is sure to be adding legislative armoury. In the meantime, he said: "Whilst I welcome these improvements, within the constraints of the current law it is clear that the passenger is the taxpayer and is still not getting the best deal in the private railway. I am determined to see that right in my forthcoming White Paper."

Despite the gains for passengers, the man with most to make from his two-year trip on the gravy train is Brian Scott. Starting his career with British Rail as a ticket clerk in 1958, he rose quickly to head up the Great Western InterCity service.

A blunt-speaking patriot in 1993 he told the then secretary of state for transport John MacGregor that "as an experienced professional railway business manager, I would not be putting my money into a train operating company."

Fortunately he did. His £37,500 investment in 1996 is now worth nearly 10,000 per cent to more than £3.7m. Others also benefited. The average employee - which includes ticket collectors and train drivers - invested £200 and will see windfalls of £30,000.

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Son of real-life 'Fugitive' in battle to prove his father's innocence



David Janssen as Dr Richard Kimble in the 1960s television serial *The Fugitive*, which was based on the Sheppard case

By Nicholas von Herberstein

A DOCTOR whose bizarre life story formed the basis of the long-running television serial *The Fugitive* has still not been completely cleared of a murder he did not commit despite new DNA evidence.

Dr Sam Sheppard was acquitted in 1966 of beating his wife to death after spending 10 years in prison. However, unlike in the television version, starring David Janssen, and the movie with Harrison Ford, Dr Sheppard became "a broken and bitter man, turned to alcohol and painkillers ... and died four years later from liver complications," said Terry Gilbert, the attorney for the Sheppard estate which is pursuing the case through the Ohio Supreme Court.

His body was exhumed in September for a forensic tests. Comparing the DNA of Dr Sheppard and samples found in a smear from Marilyn Sheppard, as well as another sam-



Sheppard on his way to jail after being convicted in 1954

ple from the original crime scene, has led to calls for a retrial.

The defence is pointing the finger at Richard Eberling, the Sheppards' window cleaner, who is currently serving a sentence for the murder of an

elderly widow in 1984. Eberling has denied the murder of Mrs Sheppard, and according to authorities, was subjected to two polygraph tests during the original investigations in 1954, which he passed.

Sam Reese Sheppard, the only son of Dr Sheppard, is unconvinced of Eberling's innocence, and is seeking redress through the legal system for his father's imprisonment. If he is successful, he could stand to gain \$2m (£1.25m).

Stephanie Tubbs Jones, the county prosecutor, argues that Sam Reese Sheppard has no legal standing. "If the Supreme Court says that the statute of limitations has run its course, then there is no law suit. What I am saying is that it has, because Sam Sheppard had never sought a wrongful incarceration claim, nor did he say that he would seek anything from the state of Ohio."

If the case does go ahead, the burden of proof for innocence will lie with the defence. "We are hopeful for a successful outcome. The last time, Sam Sheppard was vilified by the press and the community. Allegations were flying around that he was acquitted because he had a slick lawyer. This time we will prove his innocence," said Terry Gilbert.

Block on backdoor assisted places

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

COUNCILS will be stopped from introducing "backdoor" assisted places schemes under Government changes to legislation before the Commons.

The national assisted places scheme, which subsidised bright pupils from low-income families in private schools, was abolished by the Government immediately after it came to power. The money saved will be used to reduce infant class sizes.

However, Conservative-controlled Surrey County Council announced recently that it intended to send 200 children from poor backgrounds to a private school.

Ministers have introduced amendments to the School Standards and Framework Bill to give the Secretary of State power to block attempts by local authorities to introduce their own version of the scheme.

Stephen Byers, the schools standards minister, has made it clear that the Government does not intend to interfere with long-standing arrangements and councils would not, for example, be prevented from buying places for special needs pupils in private schools. Lincolnshire County Council has bought places for pupils at fee-paying Stamford School for many years.

Details of the Surrey scheme and any others which were proposed would be studied and the Secretary of State for Education would decide whether they should be allowed.

Mr Byers told the House of

Commons committee considering the Bill: "The Government opposes local education authorities buying places in independent schools, thereby taking children out of the maintained sector and offering them a different type of education."

"This is not partnership, but creates divisions in the school sector."

The Secretary of State would therefore have power to prescribe the circumstances in which local authorities could provide places in private schools. He hoped to use it rarely, if at all.

Dick Davison, of the Independent Schools Information Service, said: "The assisted places scheme is an issue on which new Labour is stubbornly old Labour."

"We are making such promising contact with them in other areas, it is a shame that their minds are closed over the idea of using public money to support low-income children in independent schools."

It was inconsistent, he added, for the Government to allow authorities to pay for places in music and ballet at private schools while barring them from academic facilities.

Dr Andrew Povey, chairman of Surrey's education committee, said: "We welcome the Government's positive attitude towards working in partnership with independent schools."

"We look forward to continuing dialogue and the subsequent development of a variety of schemes which will benefit Surrey children."

Teachers to get inspections referee

TEACHERS aggrieved about the conduct of Ofsted inspections will be able to complain to an "Ombudsman", the Government is due to announce next week.

David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Education, and the Chief Schools Inspector, Chris Woodhead, will announce the appointment of an independent arbitrator, fulfilling a pledge made last year in the education White Paper.

The move will be welcomed by teachers' leaders and critics of Ofsted, who have complained about a "reign of terror" being conducted in schools.

But sources at Ofsted were quick to make it clear that the new complaints procedure will not be a "court of appeal" over judgements in inspection reports. "This will not be an opportunity for a school to seek to change a judgement that it is failing to deliver an acceptable standard of education," they said.

Ofsted said that there were a "tiny" number of complaints about inspectors - either allegations about their conduct, or complaints that judgements were not based on evidence.

They were taken very seriously, the sources said. Inspectors were required to abide by a code of conduct - which included an insistence that judgements about schools were based on evidence, not "ideological baggage".

Schools with complaints about the conduct of inspections were encouraged first to take them up with the registered inspector leading the inspection team, or the contractor which employed them.

Most were resolved by "sensible communication" at an early stage. If this proved impossible, complaints were dealt with by Ofsted officials.

The new arbitrator would offer a further, independent complaint mechanism.

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The end A-miner (right) walking to go underground for the last shift at South Crofty, and the Cornish flag flying defiantly (left), with the pithead behind

Photograph by Peter Macdiarmid

Cornwall's tin men bid final farewell to 4,000 years of industry

By Rosa Prince

THE LAST piece of tin from Britain's last tin mine has been sold, and yesterday Cornwall's last 150 tin miners worked their final shift. Although there is still enough tin to keep miners in work for many years, its world price has fallen so far it is no longer profitable to mine.

For the past 13 years South Crofty mine, near Redruth, has been run at a loss, its workforce waiting for the price of tin to rise. Now its owners will wait no longer and a hoped-for government bail-out failed to emerge. On Thursday - St Piran's Day, the Patron Saint of Cornwall and of tin - the last piece of tin was auctioned at a hotel.

But the miners, initially resigned to Crofty's closure, are furious after the news leaked out yesterday that the mine manager, David Giddings, had bought a controlling share. Michael James, a miner for 22 years, said: "We have been sold down the river but there's nothing we can do about it." Mr Giddings said: "I was offered the shares, so I bought 8.6 million of them and became a major shareholder of South Crofty plc. But it is a personal transaction, no different from me buying shares in ICI. The timing... is insensitive and I was as sorry as anyone at that."

Sue Swift, chair of Kerrier council, said: "All the time I thought we were working with him, he was working to his own agenda. It is scandalous, it is just shocking."

Miners arriving for the final shift yesterday were dressed in overalls and hard hats stained pink over the years from tin dust. They got into the lift in teams of eight and were lowered 3,000ft into the ground. It is unlikely the mine will reopen: one and a half million gallons of water are pumped out of the mine every day and once that stops - on Friday, 13 March - the mine will flood.

Before the tin price collapsed in 1985, South Crofty employed 750 miners. A few of the 150 remaining will stay to help close South Crofty but most will start new jobs or go on the dole. Several of those already made redundant now earn £3.35 an hour packing daffodil bulbs.

Mark Kaczmarek, who worked at South Crofty for 17 years with his father and brother, said the miners do not want other jobs. "This mine has been a mother to a lot of people and it's being allowed to die." The miners worked hard to try to save the mine. The workforce took a pay cut and doubled productivity.

Bernard Ballard, operations manager, said: "Mining is a very intensive business... Lives are potentially

at risk and you are relying on your partner. That builds very strong relationships. You love it or you hate it. It's in the blood."

Redruth and nearby Cambourne were built on mining. At the height of the Industrial Revolution there were 350 mines in Cornwall. Local MP Candy Atherton said: "If you have had a mining tradition for 4,000 years, generations of people have relatives who have worked in mining. It is very sad and the closure of South Crofty does not help the general sense of decline in Cornwall."

The miners re-emerge at the end of the final shift and are hoisted down by their colleagues as they stand in the lift cages. Geoffrey Harvey, who worked in the mine with his son Richard, said: "At least he's of an age where someone will give him a job. Who is going to employ a 53-year-old?" Cedric Patterson said: "We had expected the mine to close for some time, but the mood down there today was very sombre."

Outside the gates of South Crofty a crowd gathered, waving Cornish flags, to hold a vigil for the miners. One of those present, Stuart Gilmore, said: "It is a very sad day. Closing the mine is a stupid thing to do - it is wrong from a practical as well as a sentimental point of view. There is still tin down there."



Theatre bars brewery scheme

By David Lister
Art News Editor

CAMPAIGNERS whose battle to save a community theatre was backed by the actress Susannah York have won their fight to stop it being turned into a pub.

An inquiry on the The Waterside Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon yesterday found in favour of the District Council, which opposed plans by the JD Wetherspoon brewery to open a bar and restaurant on the site.

York had told the inquiry in an emotional speech: "Once a theatre is gone, no matter how large or small, it is another brick removed from the foundations of our culture." Wetherspoon appealed to the environment department after the council blocked its application for permission to change the theatre.

Inspector Gyllian Grindley dismissed Wetherspoon's appeal, stating: "This would harm an interest of acknowledged importance, namely the local distinctiveness and uniqueness of the town."

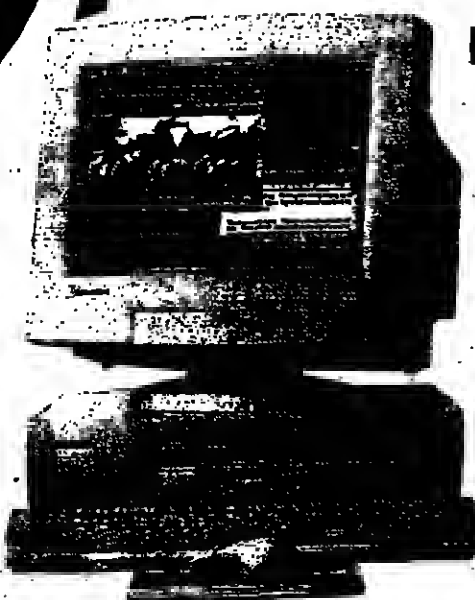
The campaigners, who include councillors, amateur thespians and residents, were backed by staff at The Royal Shakespeare Theatre, who added their congratulations and pledged continuing support to The Friends of the Waterside Theatre. Councillor Dr Geoffrey Lees, who led the council's campaign, said everyone was delighted. "There has been an overwhelming reaction to the decision. We all delighted and are very grateful to everyone who backed us. I have written to Susannah York thanking her for her wonderful contribution."

The council will now apply for lottery and arts council funding to refurbish the venue, and will also make council funding available for the project.

In London it was announced yesterday that the National Theatre had bought the Old Vic Annex for £1.1m from Ed Mirvish Enterprises Ltd, owners of The Old Vic theatre.

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Blair warns off Scots assembly troublemakers

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

TONY Blair signalled a purge of troublemakers from the candidates' list for the Scottish Parliament in a rallying call yesterday to the Labour Party in Perth to fight off the threat of the Scottish National Party.

The Prime Minister told his party he wanted to field the best candidates in the Scottish Parliamentary elections next year, which was seen as a clear warning that those who indulge in in-fighting will not be on the candidates' list.

"This isn't about stopping any particular person - it is about ensuring high quality candidates throughout Scotland. No one has an automatic right to selection. Scotland deserves the best from Labour at local and national level. That is what it will get," he said.

His remarks put question marks over some left-wing MPs who could be possible candidates for the Labour list, including Dennis Canavan, the MP for Falkirk West.

It is unclear how many Scottish Labour MPs will opt for the Scottish Parliament. Donald

Dewar, Secretary of state for Scotland, is expected to run for the post of the first minister of the Scottish Parliament.

Henry McLeish, the Scottish minister responsible for helping to draw up the devolution plans, also announced this week he would be standing for the Scottish Parliament.

Mr Blair said the referendum on Scotland showed the settled will of the Scottish people and he described the elections as a "new dawn for Scotland", with a warning to the Tory hereditary peers in the House of Lords not to block the legislation.

The Prime Minister also set out his vision for a second term of office insisting that Labour's aims would only be realised on the rock of a sound economy.

"The rock upon which everything we do is stable prudent management of the economy," he declared.

He defended the reform of the welfare state, which includes the controversial plans to cut benefits to lone parents.

The Prime Minister said the Budget would push forward these reforms by promoting work and independence,

insisting that could go hand in hand with compassion and social justice.

"New Labour is the party of economic competence in Britain today. It was never enough to say we were more caring and more compassionate, it is meaningless unless you deliver on the economy," the Prime Minister said.

"I want us to be the first Labour government in history to achieve a full successive second term in office."

But his message to the Scottish party was "keep the faith and we will win again", telling those present that government was a tough business and hard choices had to be made.

And joking about recent press reports that he was about to convert to Catholicism, Mr Blair urged the party to keep the faith then he joked: "According to the newspapers, I keep several."

In a wide-ranging speech, the Prime Minister also defended the proposals to charge students £1,000-a-year to study at university, saying it would release much-needed resources for higher education and lift the cap on student numbers.



Rallying the faithful: Tony Blair addressing delegates to the Scottish Labour Party conference in Perth yesterday

Photograph: Jeff Mitchell/Reuters

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New threat of rebellion over war pensions

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

THE Government was facing a fresh welfare rebellion last night when it announced that it was carrying out a threat by the past, Tory government to impose a £300 cut in war pensions for dead ex-soldiers.

The veteran welfare campaigner, Lord Ashley, who has had an operation to help him overcome deafness, led the protests at the Government decision to endorse a decision which Labour had vehemently attacked when it was proposed by the Tories.

The cuts, which will be imposed on future claimants for hearing loss disability following a review, will reinforce a protest by disability rights campaigners at a wide range of welfare issues.

Lord Ashley will be one of the key speakers at a mass lobby of Parliament next Tuesday in advance of the Budget to stop means-testing or taxing of disability benefits.

"The Government's statement that they will not harm people who are disabled and in need is not enough to reassure disabled people when it is set against a background of recent benefit cuts which many are experiencing," said a spokesman for the disability benefits consortium.

Threats to benefits the campaigners highlighted include: the benefits integrity project under which nearly one in five disabled people who have been assessed have lost or had cuts to their disability living allowance; a leaked memo from the Department of

Social Security, showing that the department was aiming to cut £2bn off disability spending in the short term; and cuts of £2.5bn in disability benefits inherited from the Conservative government.

The campaigners will call on Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, to suspend the benefits integrity project as "fundamentally flawed", and to set up a disability benefits taskforce involving disability organisations to ensure proper consultation on reform of benefits.

The decision to cut future payments of war pension was slipped out in a written answer in the House of Lords by Baroness Hollis, the social security minister, who said that the medical review headed by Sir Kenneth Calman, the Government's chief medical officer, concluded there was "no progression" of deafness after the sufferer was removed from the source of the noise - such as shellfire - which may have caused an injury to the servicemen's hearing.

Special measures will be introduced to protect the payments of the 10,000 war pensioners who received the additional benefits, and it will be reviewed in a year.

But the Conservative peer Lord Mackay of Ardrachish accused the Prime Minister of having to play politics with the disabled.

He said: "Tony Blair said that the changes we introduced were both shabby and mean-minded. Now he has been forced to eat his own words."

Tate asks Lords to return its paintings

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

The Tate Gallery has demanded that the House of Lords return six paintings, loaned by the gallery. The best known of the six is Landseer's *Dialogue in the Interior* which hangs in the Poets' Gallery Room and which was lent as long ago as 1985.

Sandy Nairne, assistant director at the Tate, said the gallery needed its paintings back for the opening at the end of next year of the Tate Gallery of British Art. The present Millbank site will be devoted to the history of British art when the modern art collection moves to the new Tate Gallery of Modern Art at Bankside, south-east London. Mr Nairne also said that it was now Tate policy to lend paintings not on display to regional galleries and museums rather than to the House of Lords.

However, he added that the Tate had originally asked for the paintings back this year, but had agreed to a request from the Lords to extend the loan for a further year. Despite the extension, the return of the paintings led to an anxious debate in the House of Lords on Thursday. Baroness Rawlings urged that the Tate director Nicholas Serota be asked "to reconsider the matter and think of some other paintings to lend to this House".

The chairman of committees, Lord Boston of Faversham, said: "I have no doubt that a way will be found to pass on her wishes, which were echoed around this Chamber... Mr Nicholas Serota and others... have been tremendously helpful."

'Luckiest' MPs whose seats scoop the lottery millions

By Colin Brown

THE former Tory minister, Peter Brooke, has been officially declared the "luckiest" MP in Britain, because his constituency in the heart of London has won first place in the race for funds from the National Lottery.

London seats scooped the pool of the lottery funds, and a House of Commons library report shows the Tory seat of the Cities of London and Westminster took first place in the rankings, with £346m. The £78m awarded to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in Mr Brooke's seat boosted his funds, as did £50m for the new Tate Gallery building at Bankside.

Other London seats did well

because of the predominance of arts and heritage funding projects in the capital. Holborn and St Pancras, the seat of Frank Dobson, the Secretary of State for Health, came second with £133m in grants partly because it includes the British Museum (£15m) and the Countryside Commission (£10m).

The big awards for arts, millennium and heritage projects for seats in the centre of London could work against some of the smaller groups, according to one source. "Smaller arts groups may be in danger of being overlooked because of the large sums going into this constituency," the source said.

The survey of all 659 seats is being eagerly studied by MPs.

"The MPs are very keen to see how they are doing. It's the equivalent of a best-seller," an official said.

The free guide lists the other top 10 as: 3. Birmingham Ladywood (Clare Short, overseas development minister) £104m; 4. Manchester Central (Tony Lloyd, foreign minister) £103m; 5. Liverpool Riverside (Louise Ellman, Labour) £66m; 6. Belfast South (Martin Smyth UUP) £59m; 7. Sheffield Central (Dick Caborn, minister for the regions) £58m and Kensington and Chelsea (Alan Clark, Tory) £58m; 9. Islington South and Finsbury (Chris Smith, Secretary of State for Culture) £56m; 10. Portsmouth South (Mike Hancock, Liberal Democrat) £55m.

Iraq's weapons not effective, America admits

By Patrick Cockburn and Charles Glass

A SENIOR American ambassador in the Middle East is reported to have told American citizens that Iraq's biological and chemical weapons were "very ineffective" just at the moment when the US and Britain were saying they posed a real threat which would justify airstrikes on Iraq.

The Independent has obtained a memo from an American businessman who attended a briefing at the US embassy in Kuwait on February 3 at which Jim Larocco, the ambassador, downplayed the threat from Iraq, although Kuwait City is the only foreign capital close to the Iraqi border.

"Gas masks are not required," the memo reports Mr Larocco to have said. "No one at the American embassy has

that anybody wanting a gas mask get training for it. But he flatly denies saying that Iraqi warheads were ineffective. He says: "I never said anything like that at all. I'm not an expert."

Nevertheless, the memo, drawn up by an experienced American businessman, who does not want to be identified, was written immediately after the briefing. If Mr Larocco and the US State Department believed that Iraqi warheads were effective he is unlikely to have said that American citizens need not acquire gas masks.

But British experts on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction say that Mr Larocco's comments at the briefing are a better analysis of the extent of the Iraqi threat than the far more menacing picture given by President Clinton and Tony Blair.

Mr Blair, citing figures from Porton Down, the government scientific establishment which tests biological and chemical weapons, said that a teaspoon of botulinum toxin could cause seven million deaths and the same amount of anthrax 100 million.

Dr Julian Perry-Robinson, a senior fellow at the Science Policy Research Unit and an expert on Iraqi biological and chemical weapons whose existence he helped establish in 1989, says of Mr Blair's figures: "It is a nonsense comparison. It is like saying 50,000 tons of bullets are enough to kill the entire world. Most larger armies have that number, but it does not mean the earth's population is going to die."

He says the effectiveness of biological and chemical weapons depends on the ability to deliver them and this is very uncertain in Iraq's case. For instance, in the case of anthrax if it is fired in an explosive shell then only a tenth of a per cent of the spores will survive the explosion. The US spent twenty years perfecting a programme to deliver such organisms.

At the core of the search of the UN weapons inspectors is the hunt for information on how far Iraqi scientists had got in perfecting an effective method of delivery through an "aerosol" device. Dr Perry-Robinson says that Mr Larocco's reported remarks about warheads suggest

that the US does not really believe Iraq can deliver its biological and chemical weapons. Otherwise it would have made more systematic efforts to protect its civilians in Kuwait.

Ironically, ten years ago at the end of Iraq's war with Iran and its extermination campaign against the Kurds, Washington was denying that Baghdad was manufacturing biological weapons.

When one plant at Salman Pak, south-east of Baghdad, was identified by ABC News, which had received information from Iraqi defectors, from a satellite photograph it had commissioned, the US State Department refused to credit it.



Innocent victim: Ali Hilla is running out of time. After Allied bombing near his parents' home in the south of Iraq in the last days of January 1991 his mother smelt 'insecticide'. He is not expected to live

Photograph: Robert Fisk

'No one at the US Embassy has gas masks and the embassy does not recommend any'

gas masks and the American embassy does not recommend any. They are not even interested in finding out a source for gas masks.

"The main reasons for this decision are the few intercept missiles in place in Kuwait and the fact [that] the biological and chemical warheads are very ineffective."

This private advice on the real extent of the danger posed by Iraqi biological and chemical weapons is in sharp contrast with the picture presented by President Clinton and Tony Blair. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, writing in the Independent, said the threat posed by the weapons was "terrifyingly real."

Mr Larocco confirms that he gave several briefings to American citizens in Kuwait in February and told them that Iraqi chemical and biological attack was "an extremely remote possibility."

He said he recommended

Innocent victims made to suffer for the sins of Saddam

By Robert Fisk in Baghdad

THE DISNEY PARK is empty and the government has banned the export of school textbooks - because not a single Iraqi schoolbook has been printed since 1990. Nor has a single school been built anywhere in Iraq since Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait. Lack of funds, is the reason it seems (though not enough to stop Sad-

supposing the children have pencils, which are subject to UN restrictions because they contain graphite, which could be used for military purposes.

The idea of Saddam's legions stripping the wood off school pencils to get at the graphite would be funny if the effect of UN sanctions was not so immoral. In the Basra General Hospital, children are suffering from typhoid, almost certainly from drinking water contaminated by sewage.

And who is to blame? Well, once we have gone through the Saddam routine - it is he, we are told, who is really being punished for his wickedness - we find that Iraqi water treatment plants are not being repaired. And why not? Because each individual item of machinery has to be manufactured specifically for the plants.

Technology that was up-to-date in 1990 is now obsolete. It is becoming ever more difficult to obtain spare parts. Iraq used to build its water plants with machinery from Spain, Italy and France. And UN sanctions committee approval is needed for each spare part. So the tap water is polluted.

When I ask a doctor at the Basra General Hospital why there are no children in the Disney Park, he replies: "Because they are all sent out to work by their families." On every street, children sell cigarettes, nuts, matches, or just beg. Others claw through rubbish tips for reusable goods. They are being punished, you see, because of a man called Saddam Hussein.



IRAQ APPEAL

Readers who wish to help the cancer-stricken children of southern Iraq can send cheques, made out to The Independent Iraq Appeal, to PO Box No 6870, London E4 5BT.

dam building more palaces). The Internet is a mystery to Iraqi children. New computers are banned under UN sanctions: they may have a dual military purpose. So, it appears, may cotton - because there are no more cotton sheets for hospital wards - and paper, too. Exercise books have run out; in Baghdad, one young mother admitted that she tells her children only to write in pencil, so that she can erase their work and give them back their exercise books to use again. Always

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Serbs cut off killing fields of Kosovo

By Andrew Gumbel
in Pristina

Serbian authorities imposed a security cordon yesterday where their special police forces have been attacking Albanian villages in Kosovo, blocking roads and intimidating or roughing up journalists and Western officials who tried to get through.

Albanian sources said fighting was continuing in at least one of the villages in the Drenica region, Prekaz, where houses were set on fire by Serb mortars, and that others were still under siege. The official death-toll from Thursday's fighting was 22, including two policemen, although Serbian police forces put the number at 30. Albanian leaders said as many as 50 had been killed.

One of the dead was named as Adem Jashari, said by the Serbs to be a commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army, which has claimed responsibility for attacks on policemen and "collaborators". The Jashari family is well known for its opposition to Serb rule in Kosovo, though Albanian officials said there was no evidence he had been involved in armed combat. Details

Balkan powderkeg

Kosovo has a population of about 2 million, 90 per cent of whom are Albanian. The region was the heart of the medieval Serbian state. The battle of Kosovo of 1389, where the Ottomans defeated the Serbs, marked the end of Serbia's independence and the start of four centuries of Turkish rule. Kosovo was recaptured by Serbia in 1912, but by then, Serbs were only a small minority of the population. Granted autonomy by Tito's communists in 1945, the present Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic rose to power in 1987 on promises to re-Serbianise the region and quash independence movements among the Albanians.



were sketchy and claims by both sides almost impossible to verify. The Serbs claimed to have discovered underground arms caches and secret military hospitals, while the Albanians claimed to have captured two armoured troop carriers.

Journalists trying to reach the Drenica area were turned back at police checkpoints and some of them threatened. The Red Cross reached the town of Mitrovica, north of the combat zone, and saw several of the wounded in a hospital but said they were too traumatised to talk. Another Red Cross group was stopped near the Drenica village of Glogovac and two of its members detained at the local police station.

Witnesses who passed information out of the Drenica area said women and children were trying to flee by road, while menfolk headed into the woods. They spoke of killings by police,

based not on the desire to flush out terrorists but rather a crude desire for bloodshed.

After Thursday's apparently fruitless meeting in Belgrade between Robin Cook, Foreign Secretary, and Slobodan Milosevic, the Yugoslav President, Western diplomats continued efforts to calm the situation in Kosovo and persuade the two sides to initiate dialogue about greater autonomy for the Albanian majority in the province.

Ambassadors from five of the six Contact Group countries (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, the US and Russia) travelled to the Kosovo capital, Pristina, for talks with the self-styled Kosovo president, Ibrahim Rugova, and Serbian officials. The Russian ambassador sent a deputy in his place.

The Italian religious community that successfully brokered an education accord between Serbs and Albanians 18 months ago also sent out a mediator, Mgr Vincenzo Paglia, to talk to the two sides and persuade them to work out the details of the accord together so that it could be implemented.

The Serbs appeared to have softened their line yesterday, saying they were willing to talk about autonomy issues that stopped short of outright independence for the Albanians. Kosovo Albanian intellectuals suspected this was part of a strategy to pull a diplomatic trick, alienating the Albanians through massive use of force, offering to sit down at a negotiating table confident the Albanians will refuse, and then being able to turn round and claim they are the intransigent ones, not the Serbs.



An Albanian refugee from Prekaz with her baby in a field near the embattled village. Houses in the area were set on fire by Serb mortars and estimates of the death-toll from the clashes ranged from 22 to 50. Photograph: Reuters

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NEW

Hindu party set to lead India

Leaders of India's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party said they would soon form a coalition to lead the nation. BJP leaders have been sounding confident since the bulk of vote counting in the parliamentary election ended. No party won the 273-seat majority needed to control the lower house of parliament, but the BJP was the single largest party.

— AP, New Delhi

Mexican's threat to Clinton

Hector Aguiniga Cortes, from Tecate, Mexico, has been arrested on charges of mailing letters in which he threatened to kill President Bill Clinton and former president George Bush unless people sent him money. He could face a maximum jail sentence of at least 25 years if convicted.

— AP, San Diego

Brandenburg Gate reopens

Berlin's Brandenburg Gate, incorporated into the Berlin Wall during the three decades it divided the city, has been reopened following the fall of the Wall, but only to taxi and bus traffic.

— AP, Berlin

War with Colombian rebels claims more than 100 lives

TRES ESQUINAS (Reuters) — Colombia's armed forces have admitted that more than 100 soldiers and rebels may have died in heavy fighting earlier this week.

Rebel forces from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Farc) claim they "decimated" a crack counterinsurgency unit in battles in the area over the past four days.

General Fernando Tapias, the army's second-in-command, said that "more than 100 men", including soldiers and rebels, may have died in the fighting. A senior army source said that 80 soldiers of the Third Mobile

Brigade had been killed while 30 had been injured and another 43 taken prisoner.

President Ernesto Samper was due to fly to the Tres Esquinas base, about a half-hour's flight from the battle-zone, to review operations on Friday. More than 1,000 troops are said to be combing the dense jungle for a 400-strong Farc force.

In a radio conversation with the International Committee of the Red Cross on Wednesday night, Joaquin Gomez, the Soviet-educated commander of the Farc's elite Southern Bloc division said 70 soldiers had been killed. Security forces have so far

rejected rebel calls to send in Red Cross officials while fighting continues. If the army toll is as high as reported, it would be its worst defeat in more than three decades of guerrilla war. Observers believe the rebels may be battling for positions in advance of possible peace talks with the next government, due to take office in August.

The previous worst rebel attack was in April 1996 when the Farc ambushed an army patrol along an oil pipeline in south-west Narino province, killing 31 troops. More than 35,000 civilians have died in the civil unrest in the past decade.

Instant chums who really take the cake

The litany of those people guaranteed seats on the Paris Metro, "soldiers mutilated in the war, pregnant women, etc.", does not extend to middle-aged men carrying cakes. Not officially, anyway. Mine was no ordinary cake. It was a cake the size of a soccer goalmouth, with a matching texture and appearance, which my wife and I had baked for our daughter's fourth birthday snack at school. Having taken the sensible decision to have no car in Paris, I was left with the problem of delivering two children and the monster cake to school through the morning rush-hour.

In London, such a journey by Tube, with such a cargo, would be unthinkable. In Paris, where the underground trains come every two minutes and are rarely jammed, I reckoned it would be tolerable.

In fact, it was delightful. I have never had such a pleasant Metro journey: people smiled (a rare event in Paris); they held open doors for me; they offered seats; they asked questions about the gâteau.

It was an American-made, Betty Crocker instant-mix cake, with special instructions for cooking at high altitudes. It had fancy swirls which I had got all wrong. Maybe, since we live on the fifth floor, we should have used the high-altitude instructions. I revealed none of this to my fellow passengers; I just said it was home-made. In other countries, it is pets (Britain) or children (America, Italy) which render strangers helplessly friendly. In France, it turns out, the secret is to carry a large, mis-shapen, home-made cake.

PARIS DIARY



John Lichfield

The battle for the soul of the European centre-left, real or presumed, between "Blairism" and "Jospinism" absorbs French politicians and newspapers much more than our own. Lionel Jospin, the Prime Minister, is constantly being teased by the French centre-right for not being Tony Blair.

The French intellectual Left, having originally welcomed *Le Blairisme*, was pleasantly outraged to find Britain echoing and reinforcing the belligerent American line during the recent Iraqi crisis.

In truth, there are many signs that Mr Jospin is managing the economy quite well and may be more than just a Socialist dinosaur who looks vaguely like a geography teacher.

The French centre-right refuses to accept this. One right-wing politician and former budget minister, François d'Aubert, described Mr Jospin this week as "inblairisable": a wonderful linguistic invention, which means, roughly speaking, "someone who could never be a Blair".

Or, perhaps, just someone who is "unblairable".

It would be difficult to make the case that Paris is a hardship post. Consider this, however. For two months, I've had a chronic dry cough and sore throat. Our infant daughter has had a series of minor respiratory problems, and one extremely serious one, since she was born four months ago.

When I left Paris last week to go into the country for three days, my cough and sore throat disappeared. When I returned to Paris it instantly returned.

Travelling on the Metro, with or without home-made pâtisserie, there is generally a low grumble from the throats of the passengers: the "Paris cough" a friend calls it. Air pollution is a serious problem in all large, French conurbations — an absurd state of affairs in such a large, empty country. A

study published earlier this year reported that 42 per cent of all emergency doctor's calls to sick children in the Paris area were for respiratory complaints. The number of children under 14 admitted to hospital increases by half during periods of heavy atmospheric pollution. There are topographical reasons — the ring of hills surrounding Paris — why the dirty air tends to settle over the French capital.

Both the present, and last, governments have taken steps to control emissions from cars at periods of high pollution; private cars are restricted to those with odd or even numbers, a tougher measure than any officially contemplated in Britain.

New legislation is planned to encourage "green" cars, especially electric vehicles and those with super-efficient filters on their motors. Everyone knows, however, that a principal reason why French urban air is so poor is that France has a large proportion of diesel cars: a legacy of earlier government policy, based on the wrongful belief that they are cleaner than petrol-driven cars. Diesel fuel is still taxed less heavily than petrol. The environment minister, and Green party leader, Dominique Voynet, has been campaigning to penalise, not encourage diesels.

But the lobby of French car manufacturers, which is still heavily committed to diesel models, remains too strong for her. She lost the battle in cabinet last year. When she raised the issue again recently, she was apparently met by ... polite but embarrassed coughs all around.



Sunny side up: The "delightful", cake-friendly Paris Metro. Photograph: David Hughes

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Aids drug price cut Third W

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Aids drug price cut for Third World

by Jeremy Laurance in London
and Mary Braid in Johannesburg

The price of the Aids drug, AZT, is to be cut by up to three quarters to help prevent mother-child transmission of the disease in the developing world. Glaxo Wellcome, the multinational drug company, announced the price cut after a trial in Thailand run by the US Centre for Disease Control showed that a short course of the oral drug in the last three to four weeks of pregnancy and during labour reduced the transmission rate by 51 per cent.

A spokesman for the company said the exact price would vary from country to country according to the length of treatment regimen agreed and the support networks available to ensure effective use of the drug, whose brand name is Retrovir. He said the company would still make profit at the reduced price but part of this would be ploughed back into programme support, including distribution and patient education.

Nine out of 10 people living with HIV and Aids are in developing countries and women are often unaware that they are infected. Most do not attend ante-natal clinics until late in pregnancy and may only discover they are infected at that stage.

The announcement was warmly received in South Africa. "It is absolutely amazing," said Glenda Gray, director of perinatal HIV research at the Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto yesterday. "For the first time in years we are seeing lights at the end of the tunnel. Glaxo's decision has put AZT within the reach of South African women."

It is two weeks since Dr Gray announced that research at Baragwanath supported the results of the Thai study. But the Baragwanath team's joy was marred by the frank admission that the drug, widely available in the developed world, would be too expensive for infected women in South Africa.

South Africa has one of the fastest-growing HIV infection rates in the world, with a continuing epidemic of roughly 30 per cent of children un-

der five referred to Baragwanath, just outside Johannesburg, test positive. In KwaZulu-Natal, 25 per cent of all new born babies have the virus. KwaZulu is the hardest-struck province but the rest of the country is only a few years behind. Social factors smoothed the virus's passage.

Migrant-labour practices keep men from their families for months on end and on a continent where women have few if any choices, prostitution is rife and condom use practically non-existent. KwaZulu's predicament is partly blamed on truck routes that pass down the province, bringing the virus from neighbouring countries further north. At truck stops along the way, prostitutes cost less than breakfast.

The virus has crept up on South Africa's first democratic government and administration which had so many other post-apartheid problems to tackle. That health minister Nkosazana Zuma is desperate for a cut-price solution to the Aids epidemic is evident from the government's continued support for the home-grown drug Virodene.

Though the Virodene researchers broke all the rules in administering the drug to Aids patients before it had been scientifically tested, Dr Zuma continues to champion their cause. Her enthusiasm has not been dampened by the banning of the drug which contains industrial solvent.

The government's desperation is matched by patients. Yesterday there were newspaper reports that Virodene, despite the ban, is still in circulation and there is no shortage of Aids sufferers willing to use it.

Some sound a cautious note. Dr James McIntyre, co-director of the research team, is worried by the vagueness of Glaxo's proposal. A Health Department spokesman was rather guarded. Two years ago Dr Zuma met Glaxo executives to discuss purchasing AZT at a reduced price. The health spokesman said the questions the health minister posed then remain unanswered: Just how cheaply does the company intend to sell AZT and for how long will it keep the price at that level?

Cadres fall victim to bureaucratic revolution



Security checks: Two policemen patrolling Tiananmen Square in Peking early yesterday before the start of the second session of the Chinese National People's Congress which is being held nearby. Photograph AP

China is to slash its bloated civil service in the biggest government reshuffle since 1949, writes Teresa Poole in Peking

ALMOST 50 years ago, a victorious Communist Party took control of China and resolved to eliminate the landlord class. Yesterday, party leaders proclaimed a new "revolution", this one aimed at the millions of idle, tea-swilling, newspaper-reading civil servants whose dedication to red-tape is matched only by their ingenuity at banqueting on government funds.

In a move to strike fear in the hearts of card-carrying cadres, the number of civil servants on the books of the central government ministries is to be halved by the end of this year. That is only a start. By the end of next year, provincial and lower-level local governments must come up with re-organisation plans that will mean millions more cadres stepping out into the real world.

China's bloated and bureaucratic civil service, and its trunk-loads of regulations, are the bane of life for anyone trying to get anything done in that country.

Luo Gan, a member of the State Council (China's Cabinet), admitted as much yesterday when he announced the biggest reorganisation of government since 1949.

"There is a serious problem of too many people doing too little work, causing red tape and bureaucracy, and at the same time helping corruption, embezzlement and bad social tendencies grow," he said.

Central and local government budgets had almost become "rice-eating budgets", he told this year's National People's Congress.

Mr Luo gave no numbers, but the Chinese media said the number of civil servants would be cut from 8 million to 4 million. The size of government was "too heavy and too complicated", said Mr Luo.

The first stage of reorganisation will sort out the departments under the State Council. Some 15 ministries and com-

missions will be disbanded and four "super-ministries" established, with the result that the total number of ministries falls from 40 to 29. The total number of civil servants in these organisations under the State Council, including in their provincial branches, will be halved.

"It's a revolution," said Mr Luo. But he warned that "reforms cannot proceed without resistance and risks. However, there is no way out if we do not reform."

Businesses and enterprises will be hived off from government departments, and state subsidies to non-administrative units will be phased out over three years.

The biggest risk is what to do with the cadres, or the "treasures of the state", as Mr Luo called them. He said the "re-

duction of government size and fixing of staff" would be completed by the end of this year, but it would take three years "to channel" cadres into re-training schemes and new roles.

He stressed that the unwanted cadres would keep their salaries during the three-year "channelling" period, and after training they would be able to play "a full role" in various sectors including banking, commerce and taxation departments.

However, with unemployment already soaring because of lay-offs among state enterprise workers, many of the civil servants must know that the gravy train is finally heading into the sidings.

'Too many people are doing too little work, causing red tape and helping corruption'

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Russian Jews threaten action over race attack

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

IMAGINE outrage had it happened, say, in Western Europe: the head of a territory about the size of Scotland, with three international airports and a capital bigger than Liverpool, is addressing local youngsters.

Far from giving harmless career advice, he launches into a diatribe in which he makes 61 brazenly anti-Semitic remarks. He talks of "yids" and "cosmopolitans", the Stalinist slur against Jews. He accuses Jews of inventing homosexuality, of starting the Chechen war, and of plotting to destroy Russia, his country. "They have penetrated the Russian family," he raves. "A Jewish girl would seduce a Russian boy so that the children would belong to them". Anti-Semitism is depressingly common in Russia, but this was of a different order.

The speaker, Nikolai Kondratenko, was no lesser figure than governor of Krasnodar, one of Russia's top 10 best-performing regions. Five million people live under his rule on a sweep of farmland on the north-eastern edge of the Black Sea. He is closely allied to the Communists and nationalists who dominate the Russian parliament under Gennady Zyuganov. And he is an out-and-out racist.

Such was the outrage among Russia's Jews when his speech was reported on the front page

of *Izvestia* on Wednesday that top Jewish organisations are now considering taking the governor to court, using a clause in the new Criminal Code that outlaws inciting racial hatred.

If they go ahead, it will be a landmark, a measure of the distance Russian Jews have come since the Communist years which brought Stalin's purges, religious persecution, official discrimination, and finally, as the system fell apart, mass emigration.

No leading official has ever



Gennady Zyuganov: An ally of the racist governor

been sued for anti-Semitic conduct in Boris Yeltsin's Russia. "The Communist Party is still the umbrella for these kind of guys," said Dr Michael Chlenov, head of the Jewish Federation of Russia.

When the article appeared he was inundated with angry phone calls; he is now awaiting a transcript which will be used

to determine whether to resort to the courts.

For Russia's 1 million Jews, the governor's speech was a nasty backward glimpse after a decade which has seen their fortunes rise. Moscow now has seven Jewish schools, and four higher education institutions. There are Sunday schools, kindergartens and more than 20 welfare organisations. "Ten years ago there was simply nothing, apart from semi-legal circles of refuseniks," said Dr Chlenov.

Religious traditions have begun to blossom anew. So, too, has culture. In January, *The Diary of Anne Frank* was performed in Moscow for the first time since the Khrushchev thaw. It was part of a festival held in memory of the renowned Jewish actor and theatre director, Solomon Mikhoels, who was murdered by Stalin's secret police.

Since his election in 1996, Mr Kondratenko - backed by Cosacks and nationalists - has adopted a charter declaring his region a "place of residence of Russian people". The human rights group Memorial has warned official racism could lead to "catastrophic consequences". The US-based Centre for Human Rights Advocacy claims he has a force of 300,000 Cosack troops which set up road blocks and raid homes and markets in a reign of terror aimed at driving out non-ethnic Russians.



Flashback The discovery of the body of Aldo Moro, the former Italian prime minister killed by the Red Brigades in 1978. He was one of many victims of the turmoil gripping Italy at the time and which also included Dario Fo and his wife, Franca Rame (below) Photograph: Rex Features

Dario Fo looks back in anger on era when Italy's rulers had his wife beaten and raped

IT TOOK nearly five years for Franca Rame - the Italian actress and wife of the playwright Dario Fo - to start talking about the day in 1973 when she was snatched by neo-fascists in broad daylight and gang-raped in the streets of Milan.

And it has taken 25 years for the horrific reasons behind the attack to come to public attention. An investigating magistrate still working on the terrorist outrages of the period has just revealed what the Fos suspected all along: the gang-rape was carried out on the orders of senior police officers infuriated by the couple's constant digs at the establishment, on stage and off.

The full story may not end there. New testimony suggests the commander of the Carabinieri's Pastrengo division in Milan was taking orders from the upper echelons of government, the idea being to deliver a blow against a left-wing movement that was organising protests against the ruling Christian Democrats almost daily.

"I remember the day [of the rape] very well. The commander was ecstatic," a captain in the Pastrengo division at the time, Nicolo Bozzo, said. "The news that Franca Rame had been raped was received as

The Nobel laureate is demanding that the state apologise for conniving at the trauma of his partner, Franca Rame, writes Andrew Gumbel



though someone had done the division a great favour."

Similar testimony has come from a number of former neo-fascist thugs, who say they frequently joined forces with the Pastrengo division's commander, Giovanni Battista Palumbo, to beat off what they saw as Italy's Communist menace. The neo-fascists did the Carabinieri's dirty work and were guaranteed a blind eye to their activities. A former neo-fascist since caught up in drugs rackets, Biagio Pittarel, says he was approached about carrying out the rape but turned Gen Palumbo down.

In the early 1970s Milan and indeed the whole country appeared to be on the brink of civil war. Barely a day went by without bombs, or street fights between left-wingers and neo-fascists. A rightist terrorist campaign was in full flight, and the far-left Red Brigades were beginning their remorselessly violent backlash.

The left suspected - with justification, it turned out - that the

government, backed by the CIA, was prepared to use any means to prevent the Communist Party from reaching power and had given tacit approval to terrorist outrages such as the bombing of a bank in Milan's Piazza Fontana in 1969 as an excuse to swoop on left-wing activists and toss them in jail.

Since the police and army had never been properly purged after the Fascist period, it was easy to find commanders in the security forces willing to bend the rules in the name of Cold War ideology. For many law officers, beating and torturing left-wingers was a pleasure.

The Fos were actively engaged in lampooning the political corruption and police brutality of the time. Plays by Fo like *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (about the "suicide" of a suspect in the Piazza Fontana bombing while in police custody) so incensed the establishment that theatres daring to show them routinely had their licences withdrawn.

Rame organised a volunteer group which sent packages of food and clothing to left-wingers in custody and provided defence lawyers for suspects.

So reviled by polite society were the Fos that they could not find a landlord in Milan willing to rent them an apartment. Their phones were tapped and their home bugged. Fo was arrested in Sardinia once and held for 19 hours but otherwise they stayed out of trouble.

Until the day in March 1973 when Franca Rame had a pistol shoved into the back of her neck, was bundled into a military truck, beaten, cut with razor blades, hunched with cigarette butts and gang-raped. "I'm not sure how many they were, though they must have been at least five, one at the wheel, one holding me down and the other three on top of me," she told *La Repubblica* recently in what she vowed would be her last public telling of the affair. "When they threw me out near the park, my clothes were

ripped and I was bleeding everywhere... They told me: 'If you talk, we'll kill you'."

Rame was so traumatised that she did not talk to anyone about it for years. In 1975 she managed to tell her husband about the attack, but only on paper, not verbally. Three years later she surprised everyone - including herself - by describing it all in minute detail during a one-woman show in Lucca. It was so powerful that several young women fainted and Rame herself was taken ill.

Once the Cold War ended, the old Christian Democrat order collapsed and the major figures implicated in the gang-rape were dead or politically finished (Gen Palumbo died in 1984). It became easier to discern the chain of responsibility.

Judge Salvini's most recent discoveries have prompted Dario Fo, basking in the prestige of his recent Nobel Prize for Literature, to write to the President demanding justice, even at this late stage. "How is it possible that nobody wanted to investigate until the statute of limitations for these crimes had expired?" he wrote. Establishing the truth was not a matter of revenge, he added, but an essential tool to allow Italians to recognise the barbarities of the past and move on. "Otherwise the guilty will feel that this country's institutions, and you first of all, Mr President, are there to protect 'them', not the rest of us who have undergone things that no human being should have to endure."

Belgians hold 8 Algerians in crackdown on terror groups

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

ARMED Islamic extremists are using Belgium as their main logistical back up station for terrorist activities in Algeria, state security sources in Brussels admitted yesterday.

Police carried out further raids on houses in the capital and in Verviers in southern Belgium following a siege on Thursday which ended in the arrest of eight Algerians believed to be leading members of Algeria's Armed Islamic Group. The swoop was the culmination of months of surveil-

lance and followed intelligence from British police and immigration authorities.

Belgium's interior minister, Johan Vande Lanotte, hailed the arrests as a breakthrough in efforts to combat Algerian terrorism. But Belgian security service sources, quoted in yesterday's newspapers, said the country is being used as an important "support network".

As well as a clearing house for weapons, Belgium is thought to be a key point for the manufacture of fake identity papers, money laundering and fundraising. French officials believe these clandestine networks were

set up in Belgium shortly before the Paris bombings of 1995. Belgium's proximity to northern France where a number of suspected Islamic networks are established is a key factor.

Thursday's 11-hour siege ended in the arrest of Farid Melouk, described by the French authorities as a leading terrorist. Melouk who was sentenced to eight years in prison by a French court in his absence last week, surrendered after a shoot-out which left him seriously wounded. A special police unit stormed a house in central Brussels at dawn on Thursday morning.

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What's Harry's game?

One of the most famous journalists in the world claims he has been libelled by a humble hack.

Ann Treneman says the great man should lighten up

TO SAY that Harry Evans is highly respected among British hacks is not true. Nor would it be accurate to say that the man who edited the *Sunday Times* in the Seventies is seen as merely brilliant. He is, quite simply, an icon. And the great thing about being an icon is that your status is pretty secure.

Never mind that, in New York, the great man has to live in the shadow of his magazine editor whizz of a wife. In London, he can escape from all that Mr Tina Brown stuff. When he arrives here in newspaper offices (as icons sometimes do) editors have been known to bow. "There goes the best editor this paper never had," they say as he sweeps out.

The thing about being an icon, though, is that you must act like one. Harry Evans used to be good at this. Notice the use of the past tense, for it seems that the great defender of liberal causes has lost the script. He has become that saddest of things: a journalist who thinks he has been libelled and who thinks that the answer to criticism is to gag. Is this any way for a defender of free speech to behave?

Even worse, the man who has driven Harry to this is hardly a giant on the international stage. He is freelance writer Toby Young, known in Britain for founding the *Modern Review* with Julie Burchill and, when it all went sour, for bailing her publicly. But he barely registered on the Manhattan media circuit. Until now.

Last November he wrote a relatively small article in the relatively small circulation *Spectator*, entitled "Harry in a Spin". In it he claimed that Harry had been pushed out of his New York job as head of Random House publishing and speculated as to whether Queen Tina might lose her crown as well. She might have made a success

out of *Vanity Fair*, but she had not repeated her magic on the august *New Yorker*. After five years the magazine was still not in profit and the rumour mill was working overtime. None of this makes for pleasant reading – and it may be untrue – but, as these things go, it's hardly even spiteful.

Weeks went by and things continued as they should in the court of Harry and Tina. Then, in January, a small gossip item appeared in a New York paper saying that Toby Young was writing a satirical play – called *Liberty, Egalité, Publicité* – set in New York's medalland.

Its central characters were not wholly unrelated to Harry and Tina.

The next day the *Spectator* received a letter demanding a retraction of the November article. "Toby Young seems to be making a cottage industry out of denigrating me," wrote Evans. "I have ignored this campaign to date, but the article you publish is such an escalation, so malicious, so untrue, that I cannot let it go."

Not surprisingly, all of New York was suddenly interested in reading this terrible article. The *Spectator* and Mr Young

were the talk of the town. But Mr Evans doesn't stop there. When the *Spectator* refused to act, his lawyers wrote directly to Toby Young, demanding that he apologise, pay legal fees and "desist forthwith from further defaming, denigrating and ridiculing Mr Evans and his wife". Was Harry trying to stop the play?

He says not. But he does call Toby Young a "journalistic stalker". "He is obsessed with me and my wife. I hope this doesn't sound too pompous but I care about standards in journalism." This is sick-bag stuff. What makes it worse is

that the words "standards in journalism" are something that Harry did know a huge amount about. He is the man, after all, who fought the Thalidomide campaign and countless others. Now, it seems, he is his own campaign.

I can't imagine that he expected Toby Young to apologise, and he certainly hasn't. "Harry has started to believe his own publicity. He acts like a minor member of the Royal Family. I am not one of his New York sycophants. I am not afraid to criticise him." And, perhaps most wounding of all: "Harry and Tina are behaving

like a couple of Scientologists."

Two things occur. One is that Harry has become truly American and lost his sense of humour. He definitely used to have one. In the (now infamous) *Spectator* article, Toby Young notes that Harry Evans has said that he often feels like the husband in the *New Yorker* cartoon whose wife whispered to him at a cocktail party: "Tell him who you were, Henry. Tell him who you were."

It's a good joke to tell against yourself, but perhaps Harry no longer can see the point of such things.

The other thing to note is

that Harry has simply not done his homework. After all, Toby Young does his best fighting in print. Earlier this year, Julie Burchill, in her autobiography, accused him of being "bald, bilious and paying for sex".

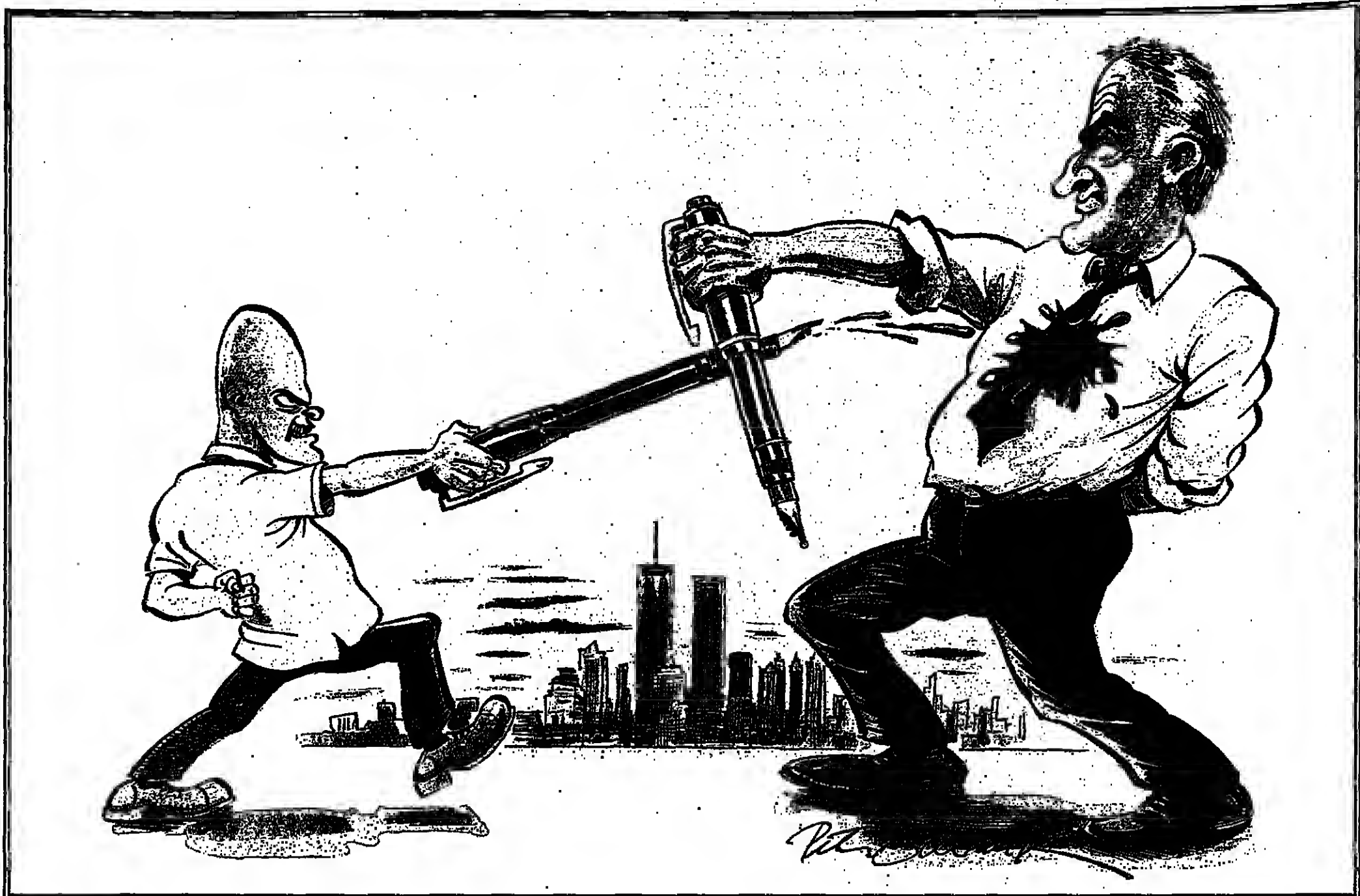
He responded in kind in a review: "Reading this gibberish, I am reminded of the late-period Elvis Presley. Just as Elvis was washed up at 40, Julie is burnt out at 38."

"Like Elvis in his rhinestone-encrusted, splitting-at-the-seams, white suit phase, she has become a grotesque parody of her former self, overweight and out of touch. Elvis

was found dead of a drug overdose on his bathroom floor at the age of 42. I wonder if Julie will last that long."

Give it up, Harry! You simply aren't up to this level of vitriol. And if you won't take my word for it, listen to yourself earlier this week. "Toby Young has played this one brilliantly," you told a journalist. "He has generated a lot of publicity for himself and his play."

True but not entirely accurate: it was Harry Evans – and not Toby Young – who generated all that publicity. It's the kind of thing an icon should know.



The instant family that fell apart

Adopting children with deep emotional scars can lead to serious problems in adolescence. Michael Delahaye reports

ANNE AND JOHN EASSON are both teachers – and that's significant. Eleven years ago, when they adopted an "instant family" of three sisters, aged two, three and five, their professional experience must have counted greatly with the adoption panel.

Today the Eassons' large Victorian house in Fetham, West London, is "a war zone" – John's words – and bears all the marks of combat. He points to the heavy pine door leading into the living-room: "One of the girls was threatening the youngest and, when she took refuge behind the door here, she pulled the door off its hinges... straight out of the door-post." On several occasions the police have been called in.

Upstairs on the landing, John produces a bunch of keys. They are all for internal doors – one for the parents' bedroom and one each for the girls' bedrooms. Each of them (Samira, now aged 16, Disa, 14, and Shirin, 16) has her own key, to stop them stealing from each other and sparking off more rows, more broken glass, more kicked-in door panels.

John and Anne no longer have a social life. They say they can't leave the girls alone for fear of the consequences. As for family visits to friends and relatives, Anne says it's just too embarrassing: "If you go to other houses and there's cash sitting there, you have to say, 'Please move it.'"

The Eassons' problems are clearly not normal. But nor are they unique, the common key is adoption and what happened in the Seventies and Eighties when the practice started of placing older, often emotionally-traumatised children with new parents. It was done for the best of motives: to give every child, no matter what his or her "history", the chance of a new beginning with



Anne and John Eason with their daughters shortly after adoption (left) and the girls as they are today



a new family. It was – and still is – carried out with almost evangelical zeal.

But such children, it is only now emerging, often have what are known as "attachment" problems. Because they fail to bond with their birth parents (often due to neglect or abuse), they never create the vital internal model on which to base future relationships. Once they are in care, this deficiency may be compounded by the experience of being moved from one residential home or foster parent to another.

The result is a form of survival mechanism: they trust no-one and try to control everything and everybody. Lying, stealing and hysterical anger are part of the package. And, instead of growing out of such behaviour, they more often grow into it.

"The damage and disturbance caused by those first few years," says David Howe, Professor of Social Work at the University of East Anglia, "can ricochet throughout the rest of your life. Even though family life is wonderful, positive and warm, you don't recover totally." Professor Howe, the author of *Patterns of Adoption*, estimates that several thousand families in Britain could be facing problems similar to the Eassons'. He compares what is now emerging

to other social phenomena that were once dismissed as isolated aberrations: "It's like dyslexia and domestic violence. Twenty or 30 years ago, people had their suspicions but the scale of it was unknown."

The failure to recognise a common cause can mean that the adoptive parents continue to struggle on in ignorance and frustration, blaming themselves. They feel a particular sense of failure because, after all, they were thoroughly vetted before being allowed to adopt. The cruellest twist is the advice frequently given at the time of adoption that "a loving and stable home will compensate for the roughest start in life."

Traumatised children can often traumatisate an entire family. One mother who was finally forced to throw out her adopted son described her family's experience "as if a hand-grenade had been tossed into our midst. Even now, four years since he left, we're still picking out bits of emotional shrapnel." Her marriage – as frequently happens – buckled under the strain.

The difficulty that these families face is that attachment problems, in their full-blown form, often emerge only when the children hit adolescence – which can be five or even 10 years after adoption. By then, the local

authority which placed the child will, understandably, feel that its obligation to provide post-adoption support has long passed.

John recalls that, when they were vetted as an adoptive couple, he and Anne were asked whether they were the sort of people who would ask for help if they hit problems. But when you do ask, he says, "The instant reaction is: 'well, you must have done something to have caused this; you're the cause of the problem.' And in that situation where you're already down and depressed and feeling defeated, that's the last thing you need."

But the saddest casualties are the children themselves. An insight into the depth of their emotional confusion comes from the Eassons' middle daughter, Disa. After several periods of exclusion from school, she is now splitting her time between school and a special adolescent unit for "behavioural modification". Asked what she wanted to say to her parents, she replied: "I don't mean to be angry with them. They've not done anything wrong. They didn't have to adopt us – and I do love them for adopting us and caring for us."

Michael Delahaye reports for BBC2's *First Sight*, 7.30pm, 12 March.

If you're not past your sell-by date, maybe you're entering the Fourth Age

ALL would live long but none would be old said Benjamin Franklin in 1741. As the 20th Century draws to a close, life expectancy has certainly increased, but no-one likes to think of themselves as old.

And how old is old these days? Is a 45-year-old woman "past her sell-by date" as the Pennell Initiative, a pressure group set up to help older women, yesterday accused doctors of thinking? If so, how do you account for Elizabeth Butler, who recently gave birth aged 60? When should a man retire? Warren Beatty and Robert Redford have hung on to their heart-throb status, despite being over 60. Does active life end at 65? John Glenn certainly doesn't think so. He plans to orbit the earth in October – at the age of 77. Society is marching forward, extending the age at which we do things.

This week the Debate of the Age was launched, with a commitment to ask 30 million people how they feel society should be managed in future with substantially fewer young people and substantially more older ones. The organisers of the debate have set it up knowing that demographic change in the next century is such that we have to revise all our perceptions of what we call age.

Had you been born in 1841, you could expect to live to 40 if you were a man, and 42 if you were a woman, so even 39 would have seemed old. By 1950, this had risen to 66 years and 71.5 years respectively. Male babies born in 1993 can look forward to 73.8 years of life and females 79.1.

Longevity has much to do with the fact that we are all healthier – but some are healthier than others. "The difference is in socio-economic class," says David James, professor of foeto-maternal medicine at Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham. "You can have a 40-year-old who acts 60 and vice versa, but it depends on socio-economic background – if you're well off you're better nourished, healthier and less likely to smoke."

Many women, like the actress Patricia Hodge, are waiting until their forties before starting a family, despite the conventional "older mothers" being defined as a sprightly 35-plus. One of the biggest tolls on women's health, frequent childbirth, has almost ceased, thanks to the Pill and the decision to have children later.

"The menopause is simply a phenomenon of this century," adds Professor James. "Women simply didn't live long enough to go through it 100 years ago."

But Dr Kevin Morgan, senior lecturer in gerontology at the University of Sheffield, argues that cultural changes have been just as important as biological ones. The difference is in what we do.

GLENDA COOPER

not what we are. "In the past we used to measure age by whether we were too old or too young to do things. It was a social construct, but an elastic measurement."

"There are so many positive role models of empowerment – such as John Glenn or Barbara Castle – that people feel there aren't just obligations but options."

Simon Knighton, director of the Debate of the Age, says: "Our attitudes need to change. There are going to be more old people and there are going to be more opportunities. The end of life debate is going to be as important as the pro-life debates of the 1960s and 1970s."

"We used to talk about the Third Age. Now we are thinking about the Fourth Age. To say what is old age is a meaningless statement." Or as the American statesman Bernard Baruch put it: Old age is always 15 years older than you are.

SPYING ON THE

The Capeman crashes

It had a charismatic star, innovative sets and a big-name composer. But there was plenty wrong with Paul Simon's first Broadway musical, says Phil Johnson

AFTER a short but stormy flight full of turbulence, the Capeman's wings will flap no more. It has been announced that Paul Simon's Broadway musical is to close on 28 March after a run of just two months and 68 post-preview performances. Despite opening only at the end of January, the show – which cost £6.8m to present – is already on its fourth director.

Savaged by the critics, targeted by Victims' Rights campaigners angry at what they saw as the martyr status Simon gave to the show's murderer-hero (the real-life figure of Salvador Agón, who died shortly after his release from prison in 1979), and struggling against severe internal problems, *The Capeman* was not, in truth, expected to enjoy a long life. Simon, who wrote both book, lyrics and music (with Nobel Prize-winning poet Derek Walcott getting a co-credit for the first two) has been quoted as saying: "What I enjoyed most about the experience, apart from the creative process itself, was the intensity with which the Latino audience responded to the play."

There is, however, a strong element of hubris involved. Simon brought his show straight into Broadway and suffered the consequences of trying to get it right first time in a milieu where shortcomings simply aren't tolerated. The role of Walcott – who has 40 years' experience with the Trinidad Theatre Workshop – was also unclear. *The Capeman*, it is safe to say, was Simon's baby and he must take the blame for the failure.

But was it any good? Well, yes and no, but mainly no. When I saw the show in preview at the beginning of January, paying my \$67 for a seat in the stalls, it was evident that there was an awful lot wrong. The story itself – Puerto Rican teenager Agón kills two white youths in a gang-fight in New York, goes to prison, comes out again and dies – was made to carry an unbearable weight of mythic significance. Agón is a catholic saint-figure, he's a victim of racism, he's Christ himself. As played by the salsa singer Rubén Blades, who gave a striking performance full of bruised nobility, Agón does live and breathe on the stage. But by splitting the central role between Blades and Marc Anthony – who plays the younger Agón – Simon cuts in half the potential power of the character from the start. It's fair to say that Anthony does not have the charisma of Blades, and that Blades does not really have much to do.

For all the show's admirable anti-racism, Simon paints a drippingly sentimental picture of Puerto Rican life. The island is a green paradise. Agón's mother is a saint, the zoot-suited gang Agón joins in New York to become the Capeman are poor, misunderstood youngsters, and it's fair to say that the climactic moment of the murder itself, and responsibility for it, is fudged.

But surely Simon must have got the music right? Well, some of it is fine, at least compared to the lamentable standard of contemporary Broadway and there are some lovely oombers full of complex, poetic lyrics, but



Down on their luck: Renoly Santiago and Marc Anthony in 'The Capeman', to close after just two months on stage

Photograph: Joan Marcus

every time a new number starts you tend to begin tapping your feet to, say, "Diamonds On the Sole of My Shoes" only to find that what you actually get is a less successful derivative. And an awful lot of the songs do sound the same, just like an awful lot of the singers sound just like Simon, the cast echoing his sweet-voiced intonation. Only Rubén Blades makes the music his own.

Where the show fails more than anything, however, at least when I saw it under the direction of Mark Morris, was the lack of a basic grasp of how to move a large cast convincingly around the stage. This was hard to believe from a MacArthur Prize-winning choreographer but the big musical oombers repeatedly failed to emerge either the performers or the audience.

The sets by the British designer Boh Crowley were often wonderful, but given the holes in the story itself, they began to have a reductive effect. As another fitted kitchen came sliding out of the wings to represent the mother's apartment, and another deliciously skewed perspective reordering of a tenement stairwell fitted into the background, one grew less and less astonished.

Despite this catalogue of shortcomings, the show still somehow had the power to move you, especially at its close. Increasingly disenchanted after his release from prison, and more and more hangdog of expression, the older Agón goes back to his mother's apartment, switches on the television and then dies. There's no big musical number, no moving death-song, no final dance-ac-

tion. He just snuffs it, quietly in his sleep. And then you cry. *The Capeman* may now have died too, and with it some of the sense of adventure that it was meant to bring to Broadway, but, if few remember Rubén Blades' performance and the brave, foolhardy but sometimes poignant sense of humanism and social concern that Simon intended, it wasn't entirely in vain. A small-scale workshop

production with 10 actors and a four-piece band might be its next incarnation. Which is maybe what it should have been in the first place. If not, there's got to be a role for Art Garfunkel in there somewhere. Re-title the show *Bright Eyes*, get in some gigantic fluffy rabbits like the animals in *The Jungle Book* and, hey, I think we might just be on to something.

Lydian modes and all that jazz

Phil Johnson meets George Russell, the man who taught Miles Davis his scales

LIKE some venerable Renaissance scholar, the Ohio-born jazz composer George Russell once wrote a book that few people have actually read but which attained an importance that went far beyond its limited circulation. *The Lydian Concept of Tonal Organization* (1953) didn't have a catchy title but it changed for ever the way jazz-musicians played, creating a new method of improvising on scales or modes instead of chords. The theory might be obscure but in practice it's as clear as day. Miles Davis's 1959 album, *Kind of Blue* – for many, the best jazz record ever made – is the most famous application of the method: John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* of 1964 is another. The modal music of the 1960s that Davis and Coltrane inspired became what we now know as modern jazz. If it was modern, Russell's book was in there somewhere, even if, like Martin Luther's little primer, almost no one involved had read it.

Once the idea caught on, though, it was as if it was part of the air people breathed and Russell didn't receive much credit for his authorship. "It's on the liner notes of *Kind of Blue* that Miles

was influenced by me," says Russell, "but the most he would say is that he learnt about modes from Bill Evans and that Bill learnt from George. Even Bill – who was a very close friend – never admitted to studying with me, but friends said he had read the book and was very into it."

If Russell feels ignored by history – and he has a right to, for he is one of the most important US composers of the century, whether you count the book or not – he has, at 74, reached a sort of affable equanimity. "That's kind of how it goes," he says when we meet in Boston, where he has been a professor at the New England Conservatory of Music since 1969. "Whereas at one time I might have felt left out because I didn't have a hand like Ellington's that performed 364 days a year, I now know that was a blessing. The main thing is that I know that, when I want to perform, I can."

The big band with whom Russell plays the Barbican tonight, the Living Time Orchestra, has been going for 14 years. Consisting largely of British musicians like star saxophonist Andy Sheppard, it's an incredible group by any

standards and Russell's music really is a glory to hear. Although melodically and harmonically complex, the band's sound is bold and explosive and, in full flight, almost unbelievably powerful. In essence it's the sound of mid-century urban America in all its convulsive energy, but beefed up by rock rhythms and high-tech keyboard voicings into a completely contemporary ensemble. Conducting from the front with a great sense of showmanship, Russell has even been known to rap a little. It is, in short, the very opposite of the now-dominant retro-aesthetic of Wynton Marsalis, about which Russell – for all his equanimity – completely loses his cool.

"This virtual jazz, cloned jazz, is such a dead idea. The concept that, after 1950, all jazz is hunk! I can understand the social reasons for it – rock had just about KO'd jazz, and jazz couldn't get up off the floor – even Miles was playing to only 400 people. And then along comes Wynton, with this idea that the real jazz all happened before 1950, and he doesn't help the situation at all!"

Marsalis's revisionist spin on jazz history is particularly irksome

for Russell because he was part of the great movement of modernism which Marsalis appears to deny. As for his great theory – the Lydian concept – "There's no way you can't use it," he says. "You're in it whether you know it or not. I was reluctant about putting the book out again in this restrictive and fascist climate, and I took it off the market for eight or nine years for revisions, but something tells me the time is now right. I've finished revising the first volume and it's just awaiting typesetting."

If he senses a change in the wind, it comes from an unusual direction. "There's every evidence that black people don't monopolise rhythmic intelligence," he says. "Go and see *Riverdance*, for example. I don't know where it came from but, boy, you can't say those people don't have rhythm. It's so refreshing to see that, because it just blows a hole in everything. As Marsalis would preach: it shows that all God's children got rhythm regardless of race, creed or colour!"

George Russell: 7.30pm tonight, at the Barbican, London (0171-638 8891).



George Russell: theoretically speaking
Photograph: Guy Le Querrec/Magnum

THE WEEK ON RADIO ROBERT HANKS

A CULT would be all right. I could handle being a cult: living hearts torn out of beautiful young virgins, students whipping each other into hysteria repeating my catch-phrases – anything short of mass suicides would be OK, as long as there was some uncritical adulation involved. Or I'd settle for cash.

One reason for switching on *The Guide to 30 Years' Hitch-Hiking* (R4, Thursday) was the hope that Douglas Adams might have some ideas to share on how to go about creating a cult. The other reason was sheer nostalgia for the original radio version of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which, after two decades and acres of repetition, still sounds astonishingly sharp, fresh and funny. Where the computer graphics of the TV series started to look dated even as it hit the screen, Paddy Kingsland's electronic sound-world retains its air of ambition and inventiveness.

Adams didn't have any hints, of course, just a few remarks that swung between blushing self-regard and self-centred modesty ("Sometimes," he said at one point, "it's hell being me"). If one theme did emerge, it was how infinitely improbable it was that the series was ever made at all. Not only was there Adams's own dilatoriness to cope with (on occa-

sion he didn't finish a script until the actors had all gone home), there was also the BBC's mulish bureaucracy: it was taken as gospel, for instance, that no comedy could be recorded in stereo, since the listener would not know from which speaker to expect the punchline.

If you have any doubts about the influence of *Hitch-Hiker*, though, try *Paradise Lost in Cyberspace* (R4, Tuesday). It is tempting to put this future-shock comedy down as one of the BBC's current spurges of rehashed old ideas. But Colin Swash's take-off of *Logan's Run* is full of ingenious ideas and witty, mildly unnerving extensions of present-day logic (such as a vision of the BBC in the 31st century "broadcasting round-the-clock news to a bossa nova beat").

All the same, it clearly could not have existed without *Hitch-Hiker's Guide*, as the casting of Stephen Moore (Marvin, the Paranoid Android) and Geoffrey McGovern (Ford Prefect) tacitly acknowledges. That's the trouble with the modern BBC: a programme can be sold as "another *Hitch-Hiker's Guide*", but as for a real *Hitch-Hiker's Guide*, a programme without any precedent – well, "infinitely improvable" starts to sound optimistic.

PETER FONDA
SCREEN TALK
from Easy Rider to Ulee's Gold
TUESDAY 10 MARCH 8.30p
Barbican Centre
Box Office 0171 638 8891

Time alone cannot always tell

CONCERT REVIEW

Towards the Millennium:
The Seventies
A Child of Our Time
RPM, SBC, London

Thematic concert programming is a risky business. Sometimes you end up with something truly enlightening; more often, the works in question stubbornly refuse to illuminate the chosen theme. Thursday's Royal Festival Hall concert in the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra's marathon *Towards the Millennium* series took three British orchestral works from the 1970s: the late Sir Michael

Tippett's Fourth Symphony, Oliver Knussen's Third and Harrison Birtwistle's *The Triumph of Time* – and there's your theme, "The Seventies".

Well, you can, if you wish, find distinctively Seventies elements in all three works, but that's hardly what makes them interesting. The half-dehumanised cry of the amplified soprano saxophone in *The Triumph of Time*, piercing the metallic halo of vibraphones and the snarls of muted trombones, speaks just as directly in our techno-threatened age as it did at the height of the Cold War. The birth-to-death idea behind Tippett's Fourth Symphony is

one of the great constant human themes, and we are probably a lot less inclined to giggle uncomfortably at tape-recorded breathing sounds than many listeners were when the Symphony first appeared, in 1977.

Simon Rattle's performances of the Birtwistle and the Tippett were of the kind that demonstrate elegantly how the elements slot together and the argument flows. On that level, I have never before heard such a convincing account of the Tippett – a performance to silence doubts (mine included). Knussen's compact Third Symphony sounded equally clear and well-calculated, but then its

clarity and intellectual virtuosity have never been called into question to anything like the same degree.

What all three performances lacked – to my ears – was the unquantifiable "tingle factor". Yes, the central climax of the Birtwistle was clearly the right organic development at the right time, but there was nothing thrilling or disturbing about it, apart from the sheer volume of the amplification. And yes, the fast sections Tippett's Fourth pressed forward as purposefully as anything in the more popular Second Symphony, but the brass fanfares often sounded cautious, reined-in.

The previous evening, Roger Norrington conducted the Loo-doo Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra in Tippett's much earlier *A Child of Our Time*, a work which, when it was still new (the Forties), was considered hellishly difficult to sing. Now it is often performed by amateur groups. It needs enthusiasm, though, and a firm hand from the conductor. Norrington ought to have been the man, but here the music fell too easily into sections; the final climax, leading to the spiritual "Deep River", was strangely underwhelming. The choir sang solidly enough, but without great intensity, and of the

soloists, only baritone Gerald Finley found the urgency text and music demand.

Hearing *A Child of Our Time* preceded by performances (by the London Adventist Choral) of the Black American spirituals it borrows in lieu of chorales made one realise afresh how inspired Tippett's use of these tunes was – and how *untypical* of his time. But then, according to Nietzsche, geniuses are always "untimely": their works are the last places one should go looking for the Zeitgeist – a truth that *Towards the Millennium* has only tended to underline.

Stephen Johnson

JOHN'S IN THE

THE INDEPENDENT

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The problem with our wanton boys

SHAKESPEARE set the text for New Labour's social policy 400 years ago: "I wish there were no age between 10 and 23, because young men get wenches with child, upset the ancients, steal and fight." That, precisely, is the problem identified by the Home Secretary last weekend. Boys and men of all classes are acting like the loutish heroes of the television comedy *Men Behaving Badly*, he said. "There's certainly something quite worrying about what is happening to a generation of men."

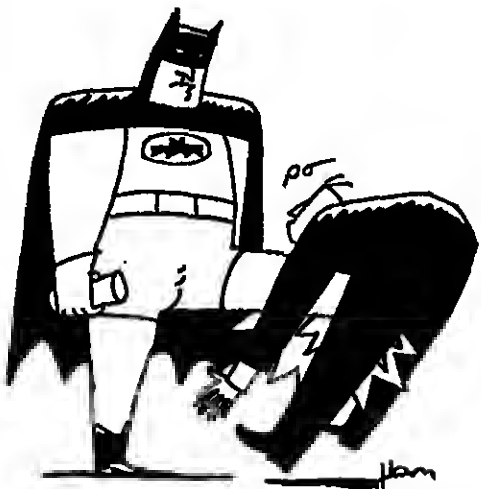
Many of the modern ills which so exercise Jack Straw and Tony Blair touch on the behaviour of males. Crime, petty vandalism, public disorder, lone parenthood, family breakdown, educational standards. In each case it is boys and men who are the focus of public policy. They are falling behind girls at school, more likely to play truant, lose interest, experiment with drugs and behave anti-socially. They are overwhelmingly responsible for the small acts of aggression which too often build up into a pattern of crime. They get wenches with child and disappear into a nether zone where the Child Support Agency cannot reach them. Or they stick around for a bit and then push off, losing contact with their children and depriving them of role models. It was ever thus, but it seems to be getting worse.

On cue, as if on a mission to prove Mr Straw right, Liam Gallagher was arrested and released on bail in Brisbane for allegedly breaking a fan's nose. For the benefit of any judges who might be reading, Mr Gallagher is the lead singer in a rock band, Oasis, renowned for their infantile and disrespectful behaviour – as well as their music. This week a Sydney woman claimed he had harassed her. He is deemed unsuitable when it comes to drawing up lists of invitations to Downing Street functions, but his marginally more respectable older brother Noel has shared champagne with Mr Blair.

(Mind you, it was Noel who last week offered reporters, trailing the band like seagulls following a ship, some tasteless words on the subject of the People's Princess.)

Mr Straw may be gratified to have his thesis vindicated in full Technicolor, like an X-rated soap opera entitled "The Problem With Boys", but the question is what he intends to do about it.

Shakespeare's shepherd in *The Winter's Tale* suggests the Government should simply abolish men between the ages of 10 and 23. This is the policy currently being enacted in the United States, where a large proportion



of this age group are locked up in prison. Unfortunately, it does not seem to have worked there, and Mr Straw would no doubt want to extend the scope of the policy in both directions. Liam Gallagher is 25. And Mr Straw has already proposed a curfew on under-10s, combined with national homework norms and state-sponsored bedtime guidelines.

Perhaps the Government should consider other approaches. In his interview, the Home Secretary said: "Some men find it really very difficult to cope with the fact that women are now increasingly on an equal footing... They try to cope with that by acting the goat, by being the fool." The implication of that is that the blame for Liam's antics lies with Patsy Kensit (notes for judges: she is Mrs Liam Gallagher). Well, perhaps on reflection and after a thorough and wide-ranging review Mr Straw will conclude that the Women (Second Class Citizens) (Restoration) Act would not be the ideal answer.

Equally, ministers should hesitate before blaming television. Mr Straw himself admitted he found *Men Behaving Badly* "entertaining". And cartoons, after decades of a very bad press, were exonerated by a study published this week. It concluded that boys tend to watch different kinds, preferring action dramas such as *Street Sharks* and *Batman*. But as anyone who had actually watched these morally didactic tales would know, they are pretty harmless.

No, when it comes to tackling the tangled undergrowth of causation linking anti-social male behaviour, poverty and exclusion, there is no alternative to the Home Secretary's patient and rather boring list of detailed initiatives. From the moment he inherited the home affairs brief from his fellow social realist Mr Blair in 1994, Mr Straw has worked on the nitty gritty of what really matters on the ground. Problem families on problem estates; co-operation between police, courts, councils, schools, social workers, charities, churches; and a shift in the focus of public debate to how families work – boys, bedtimes and parenting, rights and responsibilities.

Much of this is earnest and unglamorous politics, but his grasp of these difficult issues explains why the Home Secretary has been one of the unexpected stars of the new Labour administration.

Children's right to privacy is paramount

MEANWHILE, as just one example of *The Problem With Boys*, it is noticeable that parents these days are often as afraid for their sons as for their daughters, because teenage boys are more likely to be assaulted by others in the street. Indeed, one such incident was reported prominently yesterday.

A 14-year-old boy and his friend were set upon outside their school by two older boys, thought to be from another school. The boy was bruised and scratched, but otherwise all right. So why was this minor incident the front-page lead story in *The Express* and a front-page "exclusive" in *The Sun*? Simply because the boy's father is famous. And what did the editors of these papers sign up to just four months ago, in response to public concern about invasions of privacy after Princess Diana's death? A Code of conduct, solemn, binding and positively the last chance for press self-regulation. "Where material about the private life of a child is published there must be justification for publication other than the fame, notoriety or position of his or her parents or guardian," the Code says. Further, "In cases involving children, editors must demonstrate an exceptional public interest to override the normally paramount interests of the child."

The child's father does not want to file a complaint with the Press Complaints Commission. But why should he have to complain? Where is Lord Wakeham, the PCC's chairman? The time has come for someone else to try to make self-regulation work. Otherwise, Parliament will have to act.



Twin lambs born three days ago are watched over by Bart the sheepdog at Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire. The farm at the hall is open to the public over the weekend, from 11am until 4pm. Photograph: Brian Harris

House-moving hell

IN VIEW of your leader ("End the agony of moving house", 5 March), may I assure your readers that the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors will not seek to obstruct any innovation in relation to the house-buying process which is in the best interests of buyers and sellers? On the contrary it has published an anti-gazumping and gazundering agreement and is participating constructively as a member of the government steering committee overseeing research into the causes of delay.

Lenders are primarily concerned with the security of the loans they choose to make. Of course chartered surveyors are happy to provide the inspection and valuation reports they require, but we accept that where this ratio of loan to value is clearly relatively low they may not need a valuation.

The RICS, lenders and the Consumers Association have, however, long been concerned to advise prospective purchasers that they should not rely on the mortgage valuation report as the basis of their decision to buy. As Jeff Howell ("Mortgage lenders may drop surveys" 5 March) makes clear, most have not taken that advice. If in future they are not going to have to bear the cost of a mortgage valuation they may be willing – and would certainly be wise – to put that saving towards obtaining independent advice in the form of the RICS/ISVA Homebuyer Survey and Valuation Service or a building survey.

The institution, along with the ISVA and NAEA, has, at the Government's request, agreed to review the option that a report on each second-hand property be made available to all interested parties at the time it is put on the market. This, along with public access to prices paid in recent sales, would allow prospective purchasers to make an informed decision, reduce subsequent withdrawals, delays and renegotiation. PETER MCKENDRICK

President,
Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors

Iraq legacy

WITHOUT wishing to detract from Robert Fisk's excellent reports from Iraq I feel compelled to point out that the reference in your leader to "Robert Fisk's discovery" ("Deadly legacies of war", 5 March) concerning cancer in southern Iraq is inaccurate.

The possible links between the use of depleted uranium (DU) ordnance by the allied forces in the 1991 Gulf "war" and the increase in the number of childhood cancers in Kuwait and southern Iraq have been known for a long time. Thus a secret 1991 report for the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority suggested that there was enough DU in these areas to cause "500,000 potential deaths".

The report also stated that "It is in both the Kuwait and UK interest that this is not left to rear its head in years to come."

Last May the former US attorney general Ramsey Clark's group, The International Action Center, pub-

lished a book *Metal of Dishonor* on the subject.

What is true is that, by and large, the media has shown little interest in reporting the suffering of the Iraqi people – despite the fact that our government is in large part responsible for its continuation. I hope the front-page headline ("Iraqi children are dying – you can save them", 6 March) doesn't give people the false impression that by sending money to your appeal they can have any serious impact on this suffering. If they really want to help they should organise within their local communities to put pressure on the Government to change its immoral policy.

GABRIEL CARYLIE
Junior Research Fellow
Magdalen College
Oxford

ROBERT FISK gave a graphic and moving account of the appalling medical conditions in Iraq and the desperate plight of ordinary Iraqis who are suffering as a result of the sanctions imposed after the Gulf War. Despite statements to the contrary both food and medicines are covered by the sanctions regime.

Many common medicines are disallowed because of their "potential use in the production of arms". Disposable hypodermic syringes are not allowed, nor are very many common medicines for the treatment of heart disease and cancer. A recent trip to Iraq by voluntary workers carrying vital medicines had many medical supplies impounded by British customs. No medicines can be sent without an export licence from the Government which takes at least 6 months to obtain. How can we possibly continue to support the imposition of sanctions that are resulting

in deaths and human misery on an apocalyptic scale in the name of world peace and human rights?

Sanctions are the modern weapon of mass destruction and are being applied to finish the job started by the massive bombardment of Iraq in 1991. If such a bombardment were applied to sensitive sites in this country such as Porton Down and Aldermaston, Sellafield and the plethora of military bases on our islands we too would be suffering from the fallout caused.

Let us not forget that our arsenal of weapons of mass destruction is far more diverse and formidable than those in any Third World country and quite plainly are a far greater threat to other nations since they have been used to such great effect upon Iraq. Those who wish to donate small or large amounts to charities to send food and medicines to relieve the suffering in Iraq should at the same time and, more importantly, be demanding the lifting of sanctions to end this genocidal attack upon innocent and helpless human beings. STEPHANIE AL-WAHID

London

Porn on the Internet

POLITICIANS and commentators alike have congratulated Internet Watch Foundation on their war against digital porn, in particular child porn ("Porn images seized", 4 March).

In their report on Internet Content Rating the IWF claim not only to be enemies of the pornographer but also to be defenders of free speech. By enabling users the choice to screen out distasteful or offensive material, so the argument goes, there will be less need for governments to regulate the Internet. Personally, I do not believe for one moment that such

a rating system can exist without service providers, owners of search engines, colleges and workplaces using such a system to screen material before users get the opportunity to decide for themselves.

The IWF also claims that the proposed system is primarily aimed at parents. As parents we have a duty to protect children from the nastier aspects of life but we also have a duty not to stick our heads in the sand. How can we make informed judgement about material we never get to see and may never even know exists? In the virtual world offered by the IWF, users will even be protected from differences of opinion. The proposed scheme contains a category covering "intolerant" views of groups defined by gender, race, sexual orientation, nationality and so on.

Had we had access to such a system in recent weeks we would presumably have been blissfully unaware of the US and UK's threats of military action against Iraq or Chris Patten's views of the Chinese government expressed in his new book.

JASON BURTON
Kingston-upon-Thames
 Surrey

Student fees

IN your report ("Lords impose defeat", 3 March) of the debate in the Lords on Student Fees you said that Lord Glenamara (Ted Short) and the Earl of Longford voted against the Government on the amendment that was carried by 143 to 102. In fact, on that amendment, Lord Glenamara abstained and Lord Longford voted with the Government.

DENIS CARTER
Government Chief Whip
House of Lords

But is it art?

WE WRITE on behalf of the Council of University Deans of Arts and Humanities to express our deep concern over the confiscation by police of a book from the library stock of the University of Central England ("Are his pictures art?" 4 March).

Following referral of the publication to the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Crown Prosecution Service has advised police that they have grounds both to ask the university to destroy their copy of Mapplethorpe and to instruct its publishers Jonathan Cape/Random House to pulp all remaining copies. We believe that the possibility that the university may be prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act if they refuse to comply represents an astonishing assault on academic freedom.

One of the main functions – and responsibilities – of universities is surely to analyse culture in an objective and non-judgemental way.

Some of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs are undoubtedly disturbing in their subject-matter, but he was a major contemporary artist-photographer, one whose art should be analysed and interrogated rather than censored or pulped. Furthermore, the context in which these images were brought to the attention of the police and the CPS was that of a serious research project; this alone should bear witness to the integrity and the legality of the university's position.

We earnestly hope that no further action will be taken in this case and that academic freedom may consequently be seen still to exist in the UK. There can be no doubt that if a prosecution does result, both the international standing and the intellectual and moral authority of British higher education will be seriously damaged.

We urge the authorities to drop all thought of dragging the UK and its universities back into an era of censorship and Professor MICHAEL WORTON
Chair, CUDAH
Dean, Faculty of Arts,
University College London
ANNA HINDLEY
Arts Faculty Administrator
University College London

Glad to be gay

I WAS appalled to find a large photograph of my family in *Independent* above the headline "Glad Not To Be Gay" (3 March).

This could not be further from the case. Last years my queer music programme won gold at the Sony Radio Awards, I performed at London Gay Pride – and indeed only recently returned from marching at Sydney's Gay Mardi Gras carnival parade last weekend.

At next week's Gay & Lesbian American Music Awards in New York, my latest album *Having It Both Ways* is nominated in four different categories. For the record, I have never, ever, claimed "not to be gay" and my 20-year commitment to lesbian/gay/bisexual politics remains undiminished. TOM ROBINSON
London SW18

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I get my own table, free this, free that: I totally exploit it – Ben Affleck, film star, on the deference shown to him by Las Vegas casinos

I was so depressed that I went to see a bereavement counsellor. He told me I was too depressed to treat – Lucy Ellman, novelist

You have to be careful with women in Britain. You must never say, 'Are you a housewife?' – Michael Bloomberg, American businessman

I call it demeaning and patronising when a chit of a girl addresses a great-grandmother by her first name – Keith Waterhouse, playwright

I would prefer it if people remembered me as someone who made them laugh, and was able to make them take life a little less seriously, no matter how difficult it really is – Elizabeth Beresford, creator of *The Wombles*

It has become fashionable in Conservative circles to dismiss the entire clergy as incorrigible lefties – Peter Lilley, shadow Chancellor



Keith Waterhouse: 'demeaning'

They chickened out and they got themselves in a position where they were inventing reasons why they just didn't want to publish it which were nonsense, leaving me in a completely impossible position – Rupert Murdoch, publisher, on HarperCollins executives and their reluctance to tell Chris Patten to take his book on Hong Kong elsewhere

Rest in peace? Today's spooks don't stand the ghost of a chance



DAVID
AARONOVITCH

Some take the view that spectral infestation is as serious a problem as blocked drains. They may well be right

ARE YOU sitting comfortably? No? Good. Because I want to tell you a ghost story. Only, this isn't a story; it's really true. I heard it from *The Daily Telegraph*.

Once upon a time in 1993 in the county of Derbyshire, a joiner called Andrew Smith, his wife Josie and their children, moved into a beautiful country cottage, in the village of Upper Mayfield, for which they paid £44,000. At first the Smiths were very happy. They spent a lot on decorating *Lowes Cottage* (that was its name) and were very pleased with the results.

But then things started to go wrong. The Smiths began to feel that there was someone in the house besides themselves. Objects moved around of their own accord. Mr Smith became aware of an "evil presence". Then, one dark night, Mrs Smith awoke to find herself being throttled by invisible hands.

Since then, there have been periods when the temperature has suddenly dropped, there are inexplicable putrid smells, and the parent Smiths feel themselves to be "touched" in the night. All of which are, of course, also symptoms of a gastric flu outbreak in a young family. Or, more likely, thought the Smiths, of the existence of unquiet spirits.

This feeling was vindicated when the afflicted joiner made enquiries among older villagers. What he discovered made him both angry and frightened. The house had a terrible history indeed. A milkmaid had apparently died after being locked in the cellar (a terrible fate, but one alarmingly common in the 16th and 17th centuries according to ghost watchers). And a young boy had - it was reputed - banged himself from the rafters.

It was obvious to Andrew and Josie that Nelly and Satchavere (as I like to think of them) were doomed to roam the scene of their deaths, revenging themselves on the living. It also occurred to the haunted couple that someone could - someone should - have

warned them about the dangers of *Lowes Cottage*.

They sought advice from their solicitor, Stephen Savage. His advice was unequivocal. "The principle is familiar," he said. "It's the same as if the vendor did not declare faulty central heating or drain. If the Smiths had known about the cottage's history, they would not have bought it." This week a county court judge granted the Smiths leave to pursue a civil claim for the return of their money.

Actually, of course, this is not so much a ghost story as a parallel universe story. The Smiths claim to believe in a world in which an estate agent's blurb might run thus: "Delightfully appointed string rm. Sunny, s facing gdn. 2 ambient ghosts, 1 pgeist (upstn only), 1ge bthrm w bth, shower and wrahh. Guest cloakrm with hngng chld aprtn. Reduced because of dry-rot and curse imposed by warlock from Buxton." And in which house vendors hang over half-doors, look prospective buyers in the eye and mutter "don't come here, young master! Nelly be restless with young 'uns about!"

The local council is not sympathetic, refusing to rehouse the Smiths. "The official told us that in the council's eyes a house is not unfit for habitation just because there is a ghost in it," Angie told the *Telegraph*.

So could the Smiths actually win their case? (I bet their lawyer won't take it on a no win, no fee basis.) Well, it depends on how many others dwell on their parallel plane. For a start they've got a vicar on their side, the Rev Peter Mockford, who has visited the cottage on a number of occasions to bless its rooms ("2nd bdrm. 11x5, crck & gric book, hlsed by chch"). He was so alarmed that he advised the Smiths to leave *Lowes Cottage* over Halloween for fear of "evil forces building up".

And is it so impossible that they might find themselves in front of a parallel jury, 12 good persons and true, who watch and believe every word of Carol Vorderman's *Mysteries* on BBC1 and *Dr Strange But True* on ITV? Folk who nod at the mention of the word "poltergeist" and whose only question is "what kind: silent or moaning?" They may well take the view that spectral infestation is as real and as urgent a problem as blocked drains (which, from the Smith's description, it so much resembles). In fact many of them might prefer the drains.

A parallel judge may preside (after all, if you accept Masonic ritual, does the idea of moving ectoplasm seem so far fetched?). Evidence could be given by the small army of psychic investigators, geopathic imagers, Feng Shuists, theosophists, new age vicars, crystal stokers, astrologers, druids, Ufologists, necromancers, dowisers and aromatherapists who now stalk Britain, seeking the spiritual dimension. Witnesses galore could be found to testify to the ghostly atmosphere of *Lowes Cottage*, and - if necessary - to recount their own tales of alien abduction, communion with the dead and previous incarnations.

So, is it so unbelievable that the Smiths might indeed win their claim, and get back the £41,000 they paid to Susan Melbourne, who sold *Lowes Cottage*, and who claims that she grew up there without experiencing any moaning milkmaids or pendant lads? I mean, who could believe that?

Nobody perhaps. But the reader - whichever of the two universes he or she inhabits - might care to reflect on this: Before the Smiths brought their case, they were themselves - by strange coincidence - being sued by Mrs Melbourne. You see, the original price of the house was £44,000. But the Smiths have still not paid £3,000 of this. Four years after having moved in. Spooky, eh?

Beautiful or not, we should never surrender to the image police

Scorn the squeamish and let even those with the unstylish look be seen, says Trevor Phillips



In the eye of the beholder: Picasso's 'Woman With a Hat'

Bridgeman Art Library

SORRY, but I'm with Rupert Murdoch. There are certain things that ought not to be allowed into print. Mr Murdoch is, I think, showing a proper respect for the feelings of certain groups of senior citizens in the Republic of China by protecting them from the contents of Chris Patten's memoirs. Who knows what health risks there might be in exposure to criticism? After all, the poor dears aren't used to it. At the very least, some publications should carry a health warning, or the legend "THIS BOOK CONTAINS DANGEROUS THOUGHTS" or some such. Or, in the case of the London *Evening Standard* two days ago, there might be an age certificate, rather like a horror movie.

Jocelyne Wildenstein - the Bride of Wildenstein as she should be known - is an awful warning of the dangers of cosmetic surgery. This is the lady who claimed that she had been so pampered by her billionaire husband that she did not know how to boil water or to make toast. After finding her husband in bed with a young woman at the family's New York home, she sued for divorce and this week found herself on the right end of a maintenance order, which will give her an allowance of more than a million pounds a year, a chateau outside Paris and a huge ranch in Kenya. What her husband won't have to pay for - and there is justice in this - is the regular cosmetic surgery that Mrs Wildenstein indulges in, rather as other women have their legs waxed. What no one seems to have shared with her is the fact that the operations have left her with the kind of face normally found on the side of medieval cathedrals. She is now a grotesque.

She is also a great newspaper story, and she knows it. Mrs Wildenstein evidently does not know that her cosmetic surgeon has the most bizarre sense of humour in New York; she is so proud of his work that she provides publicity material posed in classic sex-kitten mode.

A splendid example appeared in Thursday's *Standard*, on page three (where else?), and coming upon it unprepared, would have left readers gasping. If the newspaper's editor, in a fit of liberal generosity, allowed his staff to run such pictures he should at least have the decency to put a warning on the front page, just as radio producers must run a warning

about strong language ahead of their programmes, or television children to the vast and menacing bulk of Roger Cook before the watershed.

There are good reasons why we should sometimes be confronted with non-standard features. I would also argue that beauty cannot be reduced to a pure matter of the right kind of skin, symmetrical features or any combination of hair, lips and eyes. It is also a matter of feel. In Simon Weston, the soldier who suffered multiple burns in the Falklands conflict, we can see the nobility and courage in his wrecked face and body; the reconstruction work he has undergone have added to our admiration for him.

This is not about standard norms; it is about fitness for purpose. Perhaps the way to deal with this is to do what governments always do with ticklish issues about which the public cares, establish a quango. It could be called the Public Acceptability Commission, and it could have an Ugliness Code which defines who should be allowed to appear in which media, with or without warnings. It would have

the same status as the CRE or the EOC, and have some responsibility for ensuring that people were not alarmed by unwarranted ugliness, whilst ensuring that there was no unjustified discrimination against the facially challenged.

It would be a difficult job. TV is a medium whose principal purpose is to entertain. Does that mean that TV producers should be allowed to discriminate against the facially challenged? If not, what excuse would there be to turn down Martin Amis as presenter of book programmes? Some people, for example are said to have faces perfect for radio, but the public confounds the rankings again and again. So much has been said about Anne Widdecombe that she should be a prime candidate for gargoyles stakes; yet she is now emerging as the Cuddly Party's pin-up, with her

own TV show. On the other hand, there is Peter Mandelson, who is undeniably good-looking, charming, and as I have reported before, good with children, yet has become the figure with whom some parents (admittedly mostly Labour MPs) frighten their unruly offspring. He himself acknowledged as much at the *What The Pipers Say* awards last week. Despite his success in getting us to vote for his boss, his media appearances merely seem to turn people against him. The putative Public Acceptability Commission would be forced to issue a non-appearance notice against Mandelson, whilst promoting Widdecombe as an example of the way in which the facially challenged can overcome prejudice and discrimination.

My own reputation has been immeasurably damaged by the several attempts that I have made to get the political classes not to be prejudiced against those who seem less than cuddly on TV. My efforts on behalf of the Minister Without Portfolio should have been seen as just another unpopular cause championed by someone addicted to causes. Instead it has given rise to a rumour that I hope to enter politics as Mandelson protégé. Beside the fact that this is simply not true, would anyone with any serious ambition really associate themselves with someone who needs the protection of the Public Appearance Commission? Think not.

Finally: a public service announcement. As it happens, do have one political ambition - to get a massive turnout in the London referendum on 7 May. But as my friends at Operatio Black Vote reminded us yesterday, many young people are people from ethnic minorities don't register to vote - in some areas a majority exclude themselves from democracy. If London had its own government not only would it get the credit, it would make the job of covering the capital's politics interesting again. So, make a day.

The deadline to register 20 March. I'll remind you what way to vote nearer the time.

Now that's what I call equality of opportunity



LESLEY
RIDDOCH

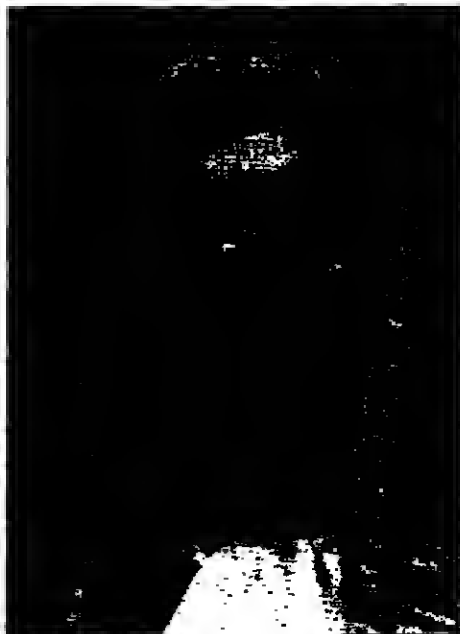
The Noah's Ark principle Labour is using to select candidates for the Scottish Parliament could transform British politics

AT LONG last someone's noticed. And Scotswomen have the much-maligned Derry Irvine to thank.

Before the headline grabbing Lord Chancellor's leaked memo this week few realised Scottish Labour are about to do something revolutionary about gender balance at the ballot box - fewer understood it and even fewer cared.

In fact twinning - or pairing as Labour describe it to avoid association with junketing councils - could transform UK politics. And a change of that magnitude shouldn't emerge surreptitiously as part of a grudging deal with the Monstrous Regiment - it should be debated and won. Until Derry's leaked memo that was looking unlikely.

Somewhat it's okay to give schools exam targets. Okay to have the army target black recruits, okay for Oxbridge colleges to target comprehensive pupils, but not okay to force the pace of change for women where it really matters... at the heart of public policy making. The last time gender balance bit the headlines was 1994 when the Jebson industrial tribunal ruled Labour's women-only shortlists illegal - a breach of the Sex Discrimination Act and unfair to men. Labour decided not to appeal, and the mechanism was scrapped, though not before it delivered the bulk of



Lord Irvine: He may be getting a bad press at the moment, but his leaked memo gave women something to thank him for

Labour's successful female candidates for the 1997 general election. The aggrieved Mr Jebson disappeared without trace.

Twinning doesn't mean positive discrimination for women - it delivers fairness for both sexes. Working on the Noah's Ark principle, the 72 Scottish constituencies are paired - by location and winnability. So for example Dunfermline West and Dunfermline East will have one joint selection procedure from which two people will be chosen - the most popular

male and female candidates. It's as simple as that. Despite the Lord Irvine row there is absolutely no doubt the Scottish Labour Party will go ahead with twinning. The only unresolved detail is how the successful man and woman decide who gets which seat.

being a candidate is the same as having a job in the first place.

Why then all the fuss this week about the threat of legal challenge?

To an extent Labour is reaping the harvest it sowed when it failed to appeal against the earlier Jebson ruling.

Public opinion is still suspicious of positive discrimination in the workplace. British law, almost alone in Europe, does not allow it. Until recently that hostility was mirrored at the European Court of Justice. But last year it ruled laws correcting historic inequalities between the sexes didn't infringe its Equal Treatment Directive. The Treaty of Amsterdam, signed by Britain, also contains a clause permitting positive action. In short Britain is out of step. Almost every other developed country in the world has more women in government - almost all have used mechanisms to achieve that.

Every elite thinks it has the intelligence and sense of fairness not to dine itself - but without a conscious effort every elite does just that. And eventually the lack of diverse thought and experience stifles creativity and renders even well meaning policies impracticable. Scotland is going to have a new parliament - a fresh start. Once MPs have been chosen it will be very difficult to challenge them.

Consider a minute. This powerful and non U-turn prone government has been forced to consider amending the Sex Discrimination Act to try to prevent another hostile and doubtless career-ending legal challenge from an angry man. Does anyone really believe such men will meekly make way for women on a voluntary basis?

For those who complain

'Twinning doesn't mean positive discrimination for women. It means fairness for both sexes'

that 101 Labour women haven't exactly transformed the Commons into a feminist Nirvana, that's true. And the only answer is more women. Evidence from Scandinavia suggests male belief systems aren't even challenged until at least a third of the legislation are female.

Scotland can transform its Rab C Nesbitt image in 1999 by raising the public status of women. If it doesn't, many Scots will conclude they've been sold a pup.

THE INSIDE STORY OF PATTEN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA

THE LAST GOVERNOR

CHRIS PATTEN & THE HANDOVER OF
HONG KONG



JONATHAN DIMBLEBY

'I have always been a bit negative about him'
RUPERT MURDOCH

'Remarkable ... contains allegations against British Ministers and officials as astonishing as anything in recent imperial history'
Simon Jenkins, THE TIMES

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Pearson cuts its losses and dumps Mindscape

By Andrew Yates

Pearson, the Financial Times to Madame Tussauds media conglomerate, yesterday drew a line under one of the most disastrous deals in its history by selling Mindscape, its troubled software group. Mindscape has cost Pearson a total of nearly £260m, including around £48m of operating losses and a £212m loss on disposal of the business.

The acquisition of Mindscape is widely recognised in the City as being one of the worst corporate acquisitions this decade. It has been a severe embarrassment to Pearson almost from the first day it was purchased in April 1994. It made a small profit that year but plunged into the red in 1995 and made a loss of £45.5m in the following 12 months.

Analysts believe the dire performance of Mindscape contributed to the downfall of Frank Barlow and Michael Blakenham, Pearson's former managing director and chairman respectively.

The sale is the most significant corporate move so far by Marjorie Scardino, Pearson's new chief executive, who has been handed the daunting task of radically reshaping a group which has been criticised as being a sprawling empire of disparate media interests. She has now raised £500m from disposals since her arrival in January last year.

Mindscape is being sold for £150m (£91m) to The Learning Company, a US software publisher. News of the sale helped Pearson shares rise 24p to hit an all-time high of 943p as investors sighed with relief that the business had finally been sold.

Analysts pointed out that Frank Barlow was instrumental

in buying Mindscape and its spectacular failure was a severe dent to his credibility in the City. "It was Barlow that forced through this deal and it probably contributed to the rug being pulled from his feet at Pearson," said an analyst.

Pearson bought Mindscape to give it a foothold in the CD-Rom market. It paid \$462m for the original business, but made a number of subsequent acquisitions which brought the total cost to \$503m (£305m). The idea was to exploit Mindscape's technology and Pearson's existing publishing strengths to develop new titles and video games. But the ex-

periment quickly turned sour. Despite optimistic predictions of huge growth, the CD-Rom market flopped. Consumer demand was lack lustre and a flood of new titles onto the market led to prices being slashed, with competitors launching a ferocious battle for shelf space. Mindscape also suffered from having more than its fair share of out of date technology. A large amount of its business was based on supplying software for cartridge based games and it was slow to embrace the shift in consumer demand for personal computers.

However, since clocking up

a huge loss in 1996, Mindscape's management have managed to turn the business around. It actually made a small profit of £1.6m in 1998, despite having made a loss of £15m in the first half of the year.

Pearson is understood to have been keen to sell the business for some time but with losses mounting it was difficult to find anybody remotely interested in the business. However, the return to profit gave it the group a chance to recoup at least some of its purchase price.

Mindscape currently produces titles such as Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing, The Complete National Geographic and Chessmaster.

Ms Scardino has enthusiastically set about reforming the media empire since her arrival in January last year, launching a £100m expansion of the FT and selling off some of the worst performing businesses.

And in her biggest acquisition to date Pearson purchased All American Communications, producer of the Baywatch series, last October for \$373m and disposals will give Pearson more financial clout to make further substantial acquisitions. Ms Scardino pledged last year to double the share price of the group by the year 2002.

Ms Scardino said: "The team at Mindscape have done a fine job in turning around its performance over the last year. But Mindscape is always going to be worth significantly more to a company like The Learning Company than it ever will be to Pearson."

"Its disposal enables us to concentrate our resources on the media businesses where we can build market-leading positions."



Marjorie Scardino: Her most significant corporate move



Lord Blakenham: Deal may have led to his departure

"The team at Mindscape have done a fine job in turning around its performance over the last year. Mindscape is always going to be worth significantly more to a company like The Learning Company than it ever will be to Pearson"
— March 1998

"The Software Toolworks represents a marvelous opportunity... to bring on board richly talented people whose skills I believe will make a difference to Pearson in many areas of our growing media business"
— March 1994

Glaxo drops its plans for a hostile SB bid

By Andrew Yates

Glaxo Wellcome has decided against launching a £1 billion hostile bid for SmithKline Beecham. It has ruled out the takeover attempt after being unable to muster enough support for the deal from its institutional shareholders. Glaxo's move is the final nail in the coffin for what would have been the biggest corporate deal in history and created by far the largest drugs group in the world. Glaxo is now preparing to tell advisers to call off bid preparations.

Glaxo began canvassing shareholders about a hostile deal after talks with SmithKline broke down two weeks ago. Its move came in response to outrage from shareholders after the merger talks collapsed. Shareholders were keen to explore ways of recouping some of the £15bn wiped from the value of their holdings since the merger talks crumbled.

SmithKline retaliated by launching its own institutional charm offensive, stressing that it had a strong future as an independent company and that its board was fully behind the decision by chief executive Jan Leschly to call off the talks.

Several large shareholders are understood to have been in favour of a hostile bid by Glaxo. However, the majority of fund managers have been lukewarm about the proposals and it became increasingly clear to Glaxo that the plan was becoming less viable.

Shareholders have been concerned about the prospects for the combined group. The main fear has been that the gulf in management style and culture between Glaxo and SmithKline was too wide to bridge the gap, even if there was a clear out of SmithKline's top executive team. A hostile bid could also have created up to £450m of goodwill which would have depressed earnings for many years. "The deal is effectively dead. The institutions did not want it," said one City source.

An institutional shareholder in Glaxo said: "There are growing worries that without the co-operation of both management teams a merger would create severe practical difficulties that we don't want to discover a few years down the line."

Another fund manager said: "We just want the two companies to get on with things as independent groups. Sometimes these things are not meant to happen."

Bank looks abroad in search for new monetary talent

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

THE Bank of England has been forced to cast its net wider and look abroad in its search for economists and financial specialists to help it in its mission to keep inflation on target and guarantee the UK's financial stability. The necessary talents to satisfy the new demand for economic expertise created by Gordon Brown's decision last May to grant the Bank its operational independence are in short supply in this country.

In a prominent full-page advertisement in the latest issue of *The Economist* magazine the Bank calls for applications from experts in a wide range of areas, from monetary theory to country risk analysis. It offers successful candidates "an unrivalled opportunity to influence the monetary policy debate".

The search for new talent reflects the change in the Bank's activities. Although it lost its banking supervision arm, it gained sole responsibility for hitting the inflation target set by the Chancellor, putting a new premium on the quality of its inflation forecasting.

The trouble is that the UK

suffers from a shortage of highly trained economists. Unlike their US, Italian and Spanish counterparts, British universities produce relatively few graduates with higher degrees. Those who do gain Master's degrees or doctorates are more often tempted by the larger salaries they can command in investment banking.

Mr Brown himself opted to appoint two foreign-born economists to the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee - Willem Buiter and DeAnne Julius - although both are long-standing UK residents.

The Government Economic Service, which provides economists to Whitehall departments including the Treasury, has had difficulty in recruiting enough suitably qualified candidates. Its new recruits are usually taken fresh from their first degrees and given further training, but many later succumb to the lure of City banks eager to hire people with some policy experience.

The Bank, which operates a separate recruitment scheme, is looking for economists with at least a Master's degree, or analysts from the financial markets for its financial stability wing.



Waldegrave: His political contacts will be an asset

William Waldegrave finds a berth as director at Kleinwort

By John Willcock

William Waldegrave, chief secretary to the Treasury until losing his seat in the election last May, is to join Dresdner Kleinwort Benson full time as a director in the investment bank's corporate finance division.

He will concentrate on UK corporate clients when he starts work at the bank's City offices on 30 March. A spokesman for the German-owned bank refused to say how much the former MP for Bristol West would be paid. He will be on a one-year rolling contract.

Observers reckon Mr Waldegrave will be valuable to the bank through his contacts in Whitehall, Westminster, the City and boardrooms across corporate Britain. Kleinwort has always prided itself on its political contacts. It was many of the first big privatisation mandates in the 1980s, including that of British Telecom.

David Clement, for instance, the former head of corporate finance at Kleinwort, was last year made deputy Governor of the Bank of England.

The Right Honourable William Waldegrave enmes

from a Tory political family and was educated at Eton, Oxford and Harvard. Elected a member of All Souls, his first political job was as political secretary to Edward Heath as Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition in 1973-5.

He also acted as assistant to Lord Weinstock, managing director of GEC, from 1975 to 1981. He first entered the Cabinet in 1990 as Secretary of State for Health, and rose to Chief Secretary to the Treasury five years later. He was on holiday yesterday and unavailable for comment. A Dresdner Klein-

wort Benson spokesman moved to quash any suspicions that Mr Waldegrave may have ever been in a position to direct privatisation work towards Kleinwort when he was in government. "The Financial Secretary to the Treasury would have dealt with Privatisations; he (Waldegrave) never had anything to do with that," said the spokesman.

Kleinwort says it is growing its corporate finance business. It is just started advising Galagthers, the US giant, and already deals with Endesa in Spain and Gazprom, the world's biggest gas company, in Russia.

United launches £90m compensation claim after pulling out of Bangkok sewerage deal

By Michael Harrison

UNITED Utilities yesterday ended its disastrous foray into the sewers of Bangkok by pulling out of a contract to modernise the city's sewerage system and launching a compensation claim to recover the £90m it has lost in the deal.

North West Water International (NWWI), UU's overseas arm, was awarded the £150m project in 1993 but quickly ran into trouble after the Bangkok Metropolitan Authority began to change the specifications and introduce

new by-laws which slowed down work on the contract.

The company made a £7m provision against the contract in 1995 and then took a further £83m charge in 1997. Late last year, work was halted on the scheme after the Bangkok authorities suspended further payments to NWWI.

UU said it was confident that it would not have to make any further provisions against the contract and disclosed that it intended to go to arbitration to recover its losses. It added that it had taken advice from senior construction lawyers in the UK

and Thailand and was confident that it had a strong case.

The project involved building a waste treatment works and a 31-mile network of sewers under the Thai capital. But the Bangkok authorities increased the specifications, asking for a 24 per cent increase in the length of tunnelling and a tripling in the number of manholes. New city regulations were also passed which restricted construction work to a four-hour period each night and prevented any work which caused "noise, vibration or excessive light".

Reuters directors must miss out on bonuses after failure to hit sales targets for dealing terminals

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

DIRECTORS at Reuters missed out on bonus payments last year because it failed to meet internal targets for installing its new dealing terminals.

Total directors' remuneration for 1997 fell by 10 per cent as installations of the Series 3000 dealing systems only reached 28,000 after the first full year of sales against a target figure of 30,000. Bonuses were also affected after the group failed to achieve a 10 per cent growth

in earnings per share last year.

The details were included in Reuters' annual report which was published yesterday. It showed that five directors enjoyed pay increases of 6.8-17.7 per cent in a year when Reuters profits fell by four per cent to £626m.

Peter Job, Reuters' chief executive, saw his basic salary increase by 17.7 per cent to £500,000, despite the absence of a bonus. In the previous year his pay was boosted by a £213,000 bonus to £551,000.

Reuters chairman Sir Christopher Hogg, who re-

signed from the group's remuneration committee last month, saw his basic salary rise by 13.5 per cent to £185,000 last year.

Reuters has been under increased pressure following an investigation in the US over whether some of its employees stole data from its arch rival Bloomberg.

Reuters has said it has no knowledge of illegal activity. Rivals have said that the Reuters 3000 system has failed to prove itself in the battle against Bloomberg.

Reuters shares closed 11p higher at 643p.

STOCK MARKETS

Indices	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5782.90	87.30	1.53	5850.00	4188.10	3.28
FTSE 250	5280.00	22.80	0.44	5285.50	4384.20	2.98
FTSE 350	2767.40	35.30	1.28	2795.80	2075.70	3.22
FTSE All Share	2694.78	33.67	1.27	2720.99	2056.07	3.20
FTSE SmallCap	2430.10	8.00	0.33	2438.70	2182.10	2.81
FTSE MicroCap	1382.30	7.00	0.51	1388.80	1225.20	3.17
FTSE AIM	1012.30	-0.30	-0.03	1135.50	985.90	1.92
FTSE 1000	8531.02	86.94	1.02	8585.08	8356.78	1.64
FTSE 1000-1	7231.97	283.42	3.99	7237.79	14489.21	0.82
FTSE 1000-2	10819.53	115.85	1.07	10820.31	7908.13	3.51
FTSE 1000-3	4715.95	92.55	2.00	4782.84	3192.38	1.81

INTEREST RATES

Money Market Rates				Bond Yields						10 year
	3 month	1 yr	2 yr	1 yr	2 yr	3 yr	4 yr	5 yr	10 year	1 yr
UK	7.56	1.31	7.56	0.83	8.04	-1.26	6.00	-1.46		
US	5.89	0.13	5.81	-0.26	5.73	-0.80	6.02	-0.86		
Japan	0.74	0.23	0.70	0.13	1.86	-0.69	2.50	-0.70		
Germany	3.52	0.27	3.77	0.44	5.00	-0.67	5.59	-0.88		

MAIN PRICE CHANGES				Falls			
	Price	Change	% Change		Price	Change	% Change
British PLC	308.00	34.50	12.81	British PLC	88.00	-4.00	-4.55
Aviva PLC	289.00	19.50	7.24	Aviva Europe PLC	208.50	-7.00	-3.36
Schroders PLC	230.00	14.00	6.28	Schroders PLC	374.50	-12.50	-3.22
Rolls Royce	287.75	15.25	5.04	Rolls Royce PLC	265.00	-7.50	-2.75

CURRENCIES

£/\$	£/€	£/¥	£/A\$	£/HK\$	£/NZ\$	£/S\$	£/R\$	£/Z\$
1.6345	1.0536	1.6017	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892
0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243
2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892
0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243
2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892
0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243
2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892
0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243
2.9589	-0.834	2.7892	0.6118	+0.380	0.8243	2.9589	-0.834	2.7892

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3627	Italy (lira)	2.873
Austria (schillings)	20.43	Japan (yen)	205.86
Belgium (francs)	59.99	Malta (lira)	0.6300
Canada (\$)	2.2640	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2774
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8477	Norway (kroner)	12.07
Denmark (kroner)	11.45	Portugal (escudos)	296.42
Finland (markka)	8.8955	Spain (pesetas)	245.89
France (francs)	9.73970	South Africa (rand)	7.7884
Germany (marks)	2.9166	Sweden (kroner)	12.91
Greece (drachmas)	460.91	Switzerland (francs)	2.3749
Hong Kong (\$)	12.29	Turkey (lira)	366.059
Ireland (pounds)	1.1681	USA (\$)	1.5989

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only



**JEREMY
WARNER**
ON WHY CALLS
FOR FIXED
EXCHANGE
RATES ARE
UNDERSTANDABLE
BUT MISGUIDED

Dealing with extremes of market behaviour

Imagine a world where all currencies were pegged one to another, so that there could be no currency devaluation or appreciation unless agreed by all through a recognised cross border organisation like the International Monetary Fund.

Plainly your pound would continue to buy more in some places than in others (though presumably even prices would eventually become homogenised across the globe), but essentially your pound would be worth the same where ever you were. To all intents and purposes what we would have is a global single currency. Exchange rate risk would be eliminated and international trade would flourish. A perfect, and in business terms, utopian world then?

OK. So maybe not. Actually it wasn't that long ago that something quite similar to this did exist. The Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate accord, established immediately after the Second World War in an effort to prevent the competitive devaluations which helped plunge the world into depression in the 1930s, prevailed for a surprisingly long time - nearly thirty years.

However, in so far as it ever worked as it was supposed to, this was because nearly all countries at that time had capital controls. The Bank of England maintained a staff of thousands to vet trade and foreign exchange transactions. It was a criminal offense to take more than £60 a head out of the country with you.

Bretton Woods eventually broke down because governments, including our own, refused to devalue despite the burgeoning

trade deficits they were running. But it took a long time. Undoubtedly, it would have happened far sooner if capital had been allowed to slop around the world in the way it does today.

One of the lessons of the economic crisis in the Far East, and indeed of our own membership of the European Exchange Rate mechanism, is that you cannot successfully combine a fixed exchange rate system with one that allows the free flow of capital. Inevitably the one will be trounced by the other.

Comparing the one system against the other, in terms of its ability to create opportunities for trade, growth and prosperity, there seems to be no contest. Today's global capital markets are infinitely more efficient in the way they allocate capital to economic ends, facilitate cross border trade in goods and services, and generally enhance living standards, than the alternative of fixed exchange rates combined with national capital controls.

So why is it that some policy makers, particularly in the Far East, are talking in lively anticipation once more about the possibility of reviving some kind of international fixed exchange rate system? The attachment of the fringe, Pacific Rim economies, to fixed exchange rates is well known.

Despite everything that has happened, President Suharto of Indonesia, still talks merrily about re-establishing his peg against the US dollar. To make the peg more credible than it was, he now proposes going the

whole hog and establishing a "currency board". Mr Suharto's motives are always suspect, and no more so than in this instance. If he were able to fix at a relatively high rate against the dollar, he and his family might find it easier to disentangle themselves from their own personal foreign currency debts, even though the wider economic consequences of such a move might be disastrous.

The tin pot dictators of the Far East are one thing, and perhaps don't deserve to be taken seriously. Japanese policy makers are quite another. This week, Eisuke Sakakibara, Japan's vice minister of finance for international affairs, has also been sounding off about the need for some kind of global fixed exchange rate system. Known as "Mr Yen" because of the power of his comments in foreign exchange markets, Mr Sakakibara said the time might be right to reintroduce something along the lines of Bretton Woods.

Later in the week he appeared to expand on this by suggesting that national currencies should peg or benchmark themselves against the world's three major regional currencies - in the Far East against the Yen, in Europe against the Euro and in the Americas against the US dollar.

One variation of this central idea, which Mr Sakakibara has also aired in the past, is that the regions would have their own international safety organisations - their own versions of the IMF - which because they would be closer and more in tune with their own regions, could apply more appropriate programmes of action and international

aid to crisis torn countries than the IMF does. The three main currencies would meanwhile trade against each other within quite restricted target zones, enforced by central bankers and the international organisations. In other words, a global fixed exchange rate system.

Mr Sakakibara's precise relationship with the Japanese Government has never been entirely clear. He's plainly well informed about policy in Japan but he's not always representative of it and his views are often his own. Even so, there may be some sympathy for what he's saying on these issues, both within the Japanese Ministry of Finance and among Japanese political leaders. Certainly his view that the crisis in the Far East is one of global capitalism, and not as the IMF implies with its reforms, one of the Asian economic model, is widely shared across the region.

It's not hard to see why. The immediate cause of the crisis was a sudden and violent flight of foreign capital. In the West, there hasn't been anything comparable since the crash of 1929 - an extraordinary collapse in asset values caused by an abrupt revaluation by international capital of an economic and corporate system that just months previously had been regarded as superior to the West.

We've no recent experience in the West of these extremes of market behaviour. It's easy for us to depict the crisis as one of crony capitalism, bad and corrupt government, inadequate regulation and a fragile banking system, but it was our Western capital that

both fed the boom on the way up and compounded the bust on the way down. Even as foreign capital has fled the region, the corporate West has moved in to take advantage of fire sale prices with significant direct investment. No wonder Malaysia's Mahathir fulminates about a Western capitalist conspiracy to recolonise his country. No wonder the nationalistic backlash across the region.

And no wonder that fixed exchange rates are seen in the East as a panacea. Nor should we immediately condemn this proposed policy response as claptrap. The idea may be misguided, but it is also understandable. One of the consequences of globalisation, rapid advances in information technology, and deregulation of markets is that the international financial system has expanded at a pace far faster than either GDP or trade. This in itself has tended to enhance the extremes of behaviour in markets and increased the risk of systemic crises.

It is obviously appropriate, therefore, for policy makers to explore ways of limiting these extremes. The markets aren't always right. They exaggerate both on the way up and on the way down, with often disastrous economic and social consequences. But love them or loath them, they have become the way of the world. Fixed exchange rates aren't the way. The solution lies rather in greater transparency and supervision, and, of course in appropriate macro economic policy. Persuading Indonesia, Malaysia, or even Japan, of this is another thing entirely.

Liberty marks new era with changes in the boardroom

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

LIBERTY, the retail group whose entire board was ousted in a shareholder coup last year, attempted to draw a line under its recent problems yesterday when it announced a new boardroom structure and

COURTS, the furniture retailer, turned the tables on its rivals yesterday when it reported surging sales just days after MFI, DFS and Carpetright had warned of severe slowdowns. Courts said sales in its two-month winter sale period to the end of February were up by 28.6 per cent. Sales in January were up by 38 per cent.

Elsewhere, John Lewis, the department store group, said it had found the going tougher in some areas of furnishings. Sales in the week to 28 February were up by just 3 per cent on the same week last year.

confirmed that it has shelved plans to spend £40m on re-developing its flagship store in Regent Street, central London.

Michele Jobling, a former marketing manager of the Timpax brand, has been appointed as managing director. Brian Muirhead, previously finance director at Whichford, a motor dealership, is the new finance director.

Liberty also named two new non-executive directors. They are David Malpas, the former deputy chairman of Tesco, and Victor Benjamin, chairman of Lex Service and also a former Tesco director.

Philip Bowman, the new chairman, said: "What we have done is draw a line under all the events of the past year. It is an end of one chapter and we are now looking into the future."

In spite of a profits warning last month, Mr Bowman said he saw the group remaining independent and added that he had received no approaches.



Liberty has shelved plans for a £40m redevelopment of its flagship store in Regent Street, central London

He said initial costs and professional fees relating to the plans of the previous management to re-develop the store would result in an exceptional charge of £8m-£10m in the company's current year accounts. This will cause a delay in the company's results which were due in late April.

Mr Bowman said the redevelopment would only have increased the value of the site by £13m-£15m. He admitted the store required investment but would not be drawn on the figure.

The company plans to look at how best to utilise its property assets which, in addition to the Regent Street store, includes a wholesale building and 15 shops in Fouberts Place. It is possible these could be sold

to raise funds for investment. Mr Bowman gave few details on the group's new strategy but said the Liberty brand could be developed in countries in the Middle East and Latin America.

Liberty was at the centre of a bitter battle last year when the founding Stewart Liberty family ousted the existing management led by Denis Cassidy.

Liberty is being sued by two former directors, Ian Thompson and Andrew Garety, for compensation for loss of office. There has been no settlement with Mr Cassidy though this is not the subject of legal proceedings.

Société Générale has been named as Liberty's financial adviser and may also act as the group's broker.

US unemployment rate drops to 4.6 per cent

THE number of new non-farm jobs in the US surged by 310,000 last month, about 60,000 more than analysts had expected. There were job gains in every sector bar manufacturing and the unemployment rate dropped from 4.7 to 4.6 per cent, matching a 25-year low. Average hourly earnings jumped 0.6 per cent, taking their year-on-year growth to 4.1 per cent. The financial markets shrugged off concern about inflationary pressures, partly because the Bureau of Labor Statistics said the 8 cent rise to \$12.60 (£7.64) an hour might be a statistical quirk. Even so, some analysts think the Federal Reserve might yet have to increase interest rates.

Transworld woos Healthcall

TRANSWORLD of the US has approached Healthcall, the UK healthcare-services provider, with a possible bid of £58.5m, which would be a 16.7 per cent premium over an earlier offer by the company's management. Transworld said it would make a further announcement "as soon as practicable". Healthcall, which provides care-in-the-home services for the elderly and disabled, advised shareholders not to take any action. HCMS, a company set up by the management to buy Healthcall, last month offered £50.1m.

Glasgow gets jobs boost

AN AMERICAN company yesterday announced plans to build a call centre in Glasgow, bringing 500 new jobs to the city. The move by TeleTech, which manages telephone, Internet and PC-based video inquiries for its clients, is the latest company to set up a telephone-based operation in Scotland.

Royal's NZ acquisitions

ROYAL & SunAlliance has bought two New Zealand businesses from Norwich Union for £53.7m. The acquisition of Norwich Union Life Insurance (NZ) and Norwich Union Investment Management (NZ), makes the company one of the top five life insurance and superannuation firms in New Zealand with assets under management in excess of £535m.

Energy chief urges caution

ENERGY Group held back from recommending either of two rival offers from US groups yesterday until more details were available and intentions "finally clarified." The latest offers are pitched at \$20p per share from PacificCorp, which has passed all regulatory hurdles, and at \$40p from Texas Utilities, which has yet to get a green light in Britain or the US. "In view of the fact that the intentions of PacificCorp and Texas Utilities have not been finally clarified, your board has not recommended either of these increased offers," Derek Bonham, Energy Group chairman, told shareholders yesterday.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Dragonair (H)	877.8m (10.4m)	80.501m (9.414m)	22.0c (20c)	+
Avirex (H)	265.8m (238.5m)	18.02m (15.67m)	121.1p (95.8p)	37p (25p)
Independent Energy (H)	57.7m (7.7m)	-0.464m (-0.387m)	-2.8p (-4.5p)	+
Libra Securities (H)	78.21m (80.02m)	0.32m (7.29m)	21.4p (18.0p)	8.1p (5.9p)
Primary Health Care (H)	+	0.5m (0.3m)	2.5p (1.4p)	0.5p (1.2p)

(H) = Hong Kong (H) = London

Indonesia warned against any backsliding

By Stephan Vines
in Hong Kong

The US yesterday insisted the Indonesian government must implement its reform programme as the country's regime stepped up its brinkmanship with the West and with the International Monetary Fund.

Robert Rubin, US Treasury Secretary, said Indonesia must adhere to the terms of its IMF reform programme to restore confidence in the economy. "The key is always with Indonesia... that there be sustained implementation of the reform programme. That is the path for dealing with the problems in the economy and recovering confidence," Mr

Rubin said. The rest of the world might not think much of Indonesia's plan to create a currency board to stabilise its currency but rumours that the plan was to be implemented saved the rupiah from one its worst one-day falls, which at one point took its value down by more than 15 per cent.

By the time trading closed the rupiah had recovered most of the ground lost during the day, producing a fall of less than 1 per cent. Local investors see the creation of a currency board and the pegging of the rupiah to the US dollar as the only way to stop the freefall which has caused the local currency to lose almost 76 per cent of its value since last July.

Although local investors like the idea of a currency board, it is opposed by the IMF which is presiding over a \$43bn (£26bn) bail-out. Yesterday there were fresh rumours that the IMF would delay release of the second \$3bn tranche of the bail-out because of dissatisfaction with the government's implementation of IMF-imposed reforms.

Finance Minister Mar'ie Muhammad said he remained optimistic the payment would be forthcoming, insisting any differences in interpretation of the reform programme would be resolved soon.

His optimism contrasted with that of most other sources. The Americans, for example, are

reported to be dissatisfied with the outcome of a mission headed by Walter Mondale which had sought to persuade Indonesia of the need to implement the programme and ditch the currency-board plan. A US official was quoted as saying results of the mission were "certainly less than we had hoped for" and Mr Rubin said only that the discussions were a "useful process". Britain has also been pushing Indonesia to follow the IMF prescriptions.

Derek Fatchett, junior Foreign Office minister, met President Suharto on Wednesday, carrying the same message as Mr Mondale and appeared to have received the same non-committal response.

White-collar staff feel the force of flexible working patterns

The trend towards "flexible" working patterns will become more pronounced amongst white-collar workers such as managers and professionals, according to a new report, writes Diane Coyle.

An analysis of figures for 1996 shows fixed-term contracts and other forms of temporary work have become more widespread this decade in research jobs and education as well as industries like catering normally associated with job insecurity. According to Warwick University's Institute for Employment Research, the proportion of people working on a temporary contract in research and development

climbed from 13.4 per cent in 1992 to 16.0 per cent in 1996. For education the proportion rose from 13.2 to 16.9 per cent.

These figures mean such arrangements are already more common in these fields than in catering, healthcare or other personal services, even though the number of people involved is smaller. Fixed-term contracts have made particular headway in teaching, applying to nearly one in five teachers. But one in 10 science and engineering professionals also has a fixed contract, and they spread particularly rapidly, from a small base, among health professionals.

WHO'S SUING WHO

**JOHN
WILLCOCK**



Hal Trick Productions, the independent makers of such TV hits as "Have I Got News For You" and "Drop the Dead Donkey" are suing the owners of a pub in Hackney which has named itself after their award-winning comedy show "Father Ted".

Hal Trick, run by joint managing directors Jimmy Mulville and Denise O'Donoghue, have been trying without success to contact the owners of "Father Ted's" in Kingsland High Street, Hackney, in London's East End, since last summer.

The writ names the pub's owners as Barry John Burke, Timothy Doyle and Faisceen Limited, the latter a company whose registered office is in Windsor, Berkshire.

Hal Trick are calling for an injunction to restrain the defendants from "passing off themselves or any business of theirs as being connected or associated in any way with the Plaintiff by use of the name 'Father Ted', 'Father Ted's' or otherwise howsoever."

The TV company, based in Finchley

Road, London, is also demanding that the pub hand over "all signs, materials, literature and other items" relevant to the name.

Sovereign Unit Trust Managers, which is owned by the mutual Teachers Assurance Group, has issued a writ against Phillips & Drew Fund Managers, NatWest Bank, Bankers Trustee Company and Knox Cropper, in a dispute over fund management fees.

The writ concerns Sovereign's eight unit trusts. Last July the investment regulator IMRO fined Sovereign £225,000 over failures in its internal organisation, for incorrectly pricing the eight trusts for more than a year, and for allowing three of its unit trusts to pay fees Sovereign should have paid itself.

In May 1996 Sovereign paid £1.4 million compensation for the errors to its 40,000 investors.

Now Sovereign's writ is claiming an in-

demnity in respect of the payments made by Sovereign to the unit holders of all eight of the funds. It claims that PDM made "wrongful payment of certain fees and charges from the assets of the said funds, namely the First Defendant's investment management fees, the First Defendant's overseas administration charges and the First Defendant's advisory fees."

NatWest, Bankers Trustee Company and Knox Cropper, a firm of chartered accountants, are joined in the writ for their role in allowing these payments to go to PDM.

A spokesman for Sovereign, based in Bournemouth, Dorset, said yesterday: "This is a protective writ which we had to lodge to keep our options open, before time runs out on the issue. It is concerning work (the defendants) did for the Sovereign funds which we were not happy with."

The spokesman added that Sovereign is no longer working with PDM or Bankers Trustee Company, but is still working with Knox Cropper.

"The Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford, acting through their delegates (trading as Oxford University Press)" are suing The Decca Record Company over a version of Boris Godunov, the opera by Modest Mussorgsky.

Oxford publishes an original version of the opera prepared in the 1960s by David Lloyd-Jones. The University now accuses Decca of having filmed a performance of the Lloyd-Jones version and of importing videos of this version from Holland, thus infringing Oxford's copyright.

The writ adds: "The Plaintiff's Director of Music and Bibles Publishing discovered a copy of the film on video for sale in Italy in November 1993."

Oxford is calling for an injunction stopping Decca from selling these videos in the UK, together with damages of up to £50,000.

Two raccoons, Plumpton and Fontwell, are suing their former managing agent, Cliff

Griggs, in a row over fees. Fontwell Pa Steeplechase Pte and The Plumpton Racecourse Pte have issued writs for damages against Mr Griggs, who trades as Pratt Co and who stopped working for them in 1996.

The two writs were issued by Fors Saunders Kerman, a firm of solicitors based in London. Andy Kerman, a member of a family which controlled both raccoons, said Plumpton was sold recently, is a member of the law firm.

The raccoons are demanding damages for breach of contract and for "fraudulent misrepresentation by the Defendant on and in writing on divers occasions..."

The writs also demand the return "money paid by the Plaintiff to the defendant under a mistake of fact as to what was properly chargeable to the Plaintiff Defendant."

The raccoons owners also demand complete account of the money paid to defendant.

Next suits City with a smart recovery

MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Next, the retailer, ended a three-day week with a smart, if modest, recovery. The shares rallied 41p to 753p as investment house Morgan Stanley, long time fans of the group, dismissed the bear stories which have swirled around the stock market and upgraded its recommendation to "strong buy".

At one time the price was up 67p. It slipped back in the last 30 minutes. The shares started the week at 825p.

Analyst Peter Brockwell said the market "had grown increasingly alarmed by what amounts to scare mongering and has lost touch with the fundamentals of the company".

Rumours questioned the health of chief executive David Jones, the man responsible for rescuing Next when it seemed destined for the corporate graveyard. They also claimed there were problems with the chain's spring range and a profits

warning was being prepared. A fit David Jones has told investors he is prepared to challenge them to two rounds of golf and Mr Brockwell said the Next chief executive "is very well and is mystified by persistent reports of his ill health in the City".

The analyst said he was "firmly of the opinion that there is no requirement for a profits warning".

He pointed to the group's Christmas trading report when it said sales had gone well and said autumn/winter stocks had been cleared. The spring range was in the shops in January.

The signalled departure of chairman Lord Wolfson of Sunningdale, who is also chairman of Great Universal Stores, was interpreted as diminishing the chance of a GUS take over strike.

Last month Next shares hit an 835p peak. When disaster appeared inevitable at the end of 1990 they closed at

13.5p having fallen into single figures.

GUS has, of course, alighted with a hostile 570p a share strike on Argos, the catalogue stores chain. Argos slipped 3p to 606p as Dresner Kleinwort Benson said sell. The investment house believes there is little chance of a white knight appearing and the bid could be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

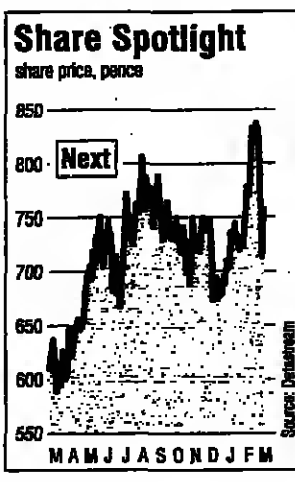
The market ended a three day losing patch in some style with Footsie recovering 87.3 points to 5,782.9. The mid and small cap indices put on positive displays.

Schroders, the investment group, led the blue chip surge, up 140p at 2,370p. Take over talk was, of course, in the air but its results, due next week, probably provided the main impetus. Profits are expected to emerge at £265m against £238.7m with the dividend increased by 3p to 23p.

The rest of the financial pack

made headway with Halifax up 14p to 937p and Prudential Corporation 28.5p to 898.5p.

Rolls-Royce continued to fly on its results, climbing a further 15.2p to 267.75p and British Aerospace rose 54p to 1,932p in sympathy. Panmure Gordon is cautious about Rolls projected progress and regards the shares as a sell.



Jarvis, the rail maintenance group, shunted along at 4.75p three years ago, came within a whisker of 600p, closing at 596p.

Colt Telecom enjoyed another busy line with a 65p gain to 1,335p.

SmithKline Beecham was again active, improving 28p to 808p as bid hopes persisted. Deutsche Morgan Grenfell set the shares going to 1,100p. Glaxo Wellcome put on 34p at 1,656p.

Bass, the brewer and hotelier, frothed up 10p to 1,000p as Lehman Brothers raised its target price to 1,200p following the take over of Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts. Morgan Stanley's forecast of 625p for Allied Domecq had no immediate impressing with the shares falling 8p to 562p.

The end of Pearson's tormented ownership of consumer software publisher Mindspace pushed the shares up 24p to 943p. Vodafone recovered from

Thursday's reference to the MMC, gaining 23.5p to 539.5p. But BT gave further ground, off 3p to 589p.

Barcom, a plant hire group, advanced 19.5p to 68.5p after GE Capital, the US group, emerged with an agreed 72p a share takeover bid. Health-care moved forward 13.5p as Transworld Healthcare signalled a 105p offer.

FirstGroup's controversial £140m swoop for Great Western, the railway, gave the shares a 34.5p push to 308p.

Vaux Group, the Sunderland-based brewer and hotelier, fell 6p to 229p, a shade above its 12 month low. Profits this year are expected to be around £40.7m against last year's £38.3m.

Prime People, the recruitment group, put on a further 2.25p to 13.75p ahead of next week's figures and Rage Software, continued to draw support on talk of a new computer game, gaining 1.25p to 10.5p.

TAKING STOCK

Dealings are due to start on the fringe Ofex share market on Monday in Advance Digital Communications, latest offering from the Raetz & Co. investment house. Shares were sold at 20p giving a capitalisation of £7m. The offer was heavily oversubscribed. ADC, started in 1982, specialises in visual communications for corporate events. "Illustrative financial projections" suggests profits of £2.1m this year and £6.6m next.

Graham, the builders merchant, should lift profits from £21.3m to £27.5m this year and produce £3m next year, believe stockbroker Albert E Sharp. The shares floated at 177p. They were floated at 183p four years ago. Since then the price has touched 217p and been as low as 119p. The analyst Robert Griffiths is keen on the shares but believes the group is unlikely to be a prime takeover target in any industry consolidation.

Index	Low	High	Open	Close	Change	Volume
FTSE 100	5782.9	5800.0	5782.9	5782.9	+87.3	1,200,000,000
FTSE 250	10,500.0	10,600.0	10,500.0	10,500.0	+100.0	500,000,000
FTSE SmallCap	4,500.0	4,600.0	4,500.0	4,500.0	+50.0	200,000,000

Share	Price	Change	Volume
Next	753p	+41p	1,000,000
FTSE 100	5782.9	+87.3	1,200,000,000

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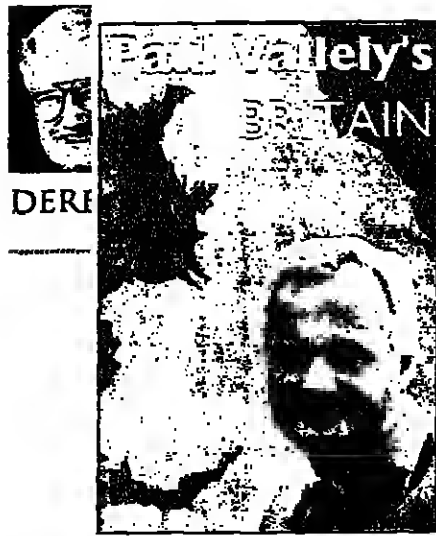
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N Taking on the die-hard flat caps

MAR



Place: Barnsley

It may be a grim town, poor of pocket and health, but it has a young Labour council leader who is way ahead of Tony Blair in transforming local government



Breaking the mould: Stephen Houghton, 38, leader of Barnsley council for just over a year, is working to unite the town on education, economic regeneration and crime. "He is bringing people together without a set agenda," says one businessman

Photograph: John Houlahan/Guzzell

IT IS EASY to take the mickey out of Barnsley. People have been doing it for years. There is, in Yorkshire, the legendary story of Gilbert Gray QC who was representing a working man from the town before a judge of particular pomposity who, at one point smoothly interjected: "I take it, Mr Gray, that your client is familiar with the maxim: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*" "Indeed my lord, responded the QC drily. "In Barnsley they speak of little else."

No one in Barnsley, of course, could be expected to understand the Latin for "Who polices the policemen?" For Barnsley is stereotypically a grim town of flat caps, whippets and pigeon lofts which was last year described in one report as the poorest town in Britain. Until recently, Barnsley was bottom of the national league table for the amount of government money going to the local authority, bottom of the table for employment and top of the league for long-term illnesses - the legacy of the lung-diseases of mining.

It is also in the heart of the Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire. Labour has been in power here since 1935. So Barnsley was, presumably, the kind of place that Tony Blair had in mind this week when he launched his initiative to change the culture of Britain's local government.

The Prime Minister has proposed that local councils should be run by directly elected Big Name mayors who will appoint cabinets to assist them, with the rest of the council members acting as backbenchers to scrutinise this powerful new executive. He wants councils to ditch the

place and instead to adopt the role of leaders in partnerships which involve local business, schools and colleges, health trusts, the police and voluntary and community groups. He wants councils to transform themselves from bodies of middle-aged men into groups which more accurately reflect the makeup of the local population with far more young people, women and members of ethnic minorities.

But hang on. For backward old Barnsley is actually well ahead of the game here. Just over a year ago, the controlling Labour group elected their youngest member, Steve Houghton, then only 38, as its leader. He began a Blairite transformation of the town six months before Mr Blair himself took office.

I say "began" advisedly. Mr Houghton has a long way to go, as was evident last Thursday at the council meeting to approve the budget for next year. There, in a council chamber panelled with handsome walnut veneers and surrounded by fluted columns in oak topped with gilded Corinthian capitals, the worthies of Barnsley gathered in their antique dignity. Chaired by the mayor in red robes, white ruff and heavy gold chain, the council went through the charade of debating measures that had already been agreed by the town's real decision-makers, the Labour group's political executive.

For two hours, the council's 63 Labour members indulged themselves in a round of party political mockery, thick with "bees" and "the know" at the expense of the three opposition councillors (one

Conservative and two Independents too scared of the electors to call themselves Tories). The session would have confirmed all Tony Blair's worst suspicions.

There have been revolts against the excesses of the one-party state in Barnsley before. At the end of the Eighties, one disaffected Labour councillor set up the Barnsley Party protesting that Labour's incestuous relations with local government unions meant that council employees were, in effect, running the place. Jack Brown also objected to party members packing the Tenants and Residents' Associations which ought to have been a check on the council's activities.

But his was a voice in the wilderness (partly because the arrangements were too cosy for many of the town's key figures, and partly because Mr Brown held deeply politically in-

correct views on the feminist and gay lobbies in the party). "What Blair is doing is what we advocated in the Eighties but everybody said it was too idealistic," said Mr Brown this week.

Sitting in the leader's office, Steve Houghton diplomatically declined to pick up on the references to the now defunct Barnsley Party. There is still a deal of resentment against Mr Brown, among Mr Houghton's older colleagues. Instead, the young leader turned his attention to Tony Blair's pamphlet - which, with commendable Yorkshire frugality, he had in a photocopy (the 22-page booklet costs £4.99 in its original form). The "partnerships" that the Prime Minister proposes - on crime, education and economic regeneration - already flourish in Barnsley, thanks to Mr Houghton.

"In education, we're trying to fight out why the results at the [tertiary]

college are so good and in schools so poor," he said. Only 28 per cent of pupils pass GCSEs at grades A to C in the town, compared with a national average of 44 per cent. As well as bringing together all levels of education, and local businesses, Mr Houghton wrote to parents to ask them to get involved; cynics were dumbfounded when 6,000 wrote back and volunteered to join in.

"It's a radical change," said Alan Sheriff, one of the businessmen involved who is also chairman of the local hospital trust. "He is bringing people together without a pre-set agenda. I think we're making real progress on both education and on beginning to nurture the entrepreneurial culture the town has always lacked."

Key to that is the establishment of a Business Development Agency as a private company in partnership

with the Chamber of Commerce and others. "Sixty per cent of the seats on the board have gone to the private sector," said Roger Nunn, the chamber's chief executive. "He has had a very hard job persuading the old guard on the council to accept it. Many of the die-hards would like to revert to the old ways of command and control."

Mr Houghton himself is sanguine: "We cede control but gain influence," he said.

"Going back to the idea of 'give us more money and we'll do everything' is not an option," he told fellow councillors in the budget meeting. At the end of his speech he was applauded - vehemently by some, but only politely by the kind of councillor the Prime Minister hopes to replace with new blood.

What Tony Blair wants is women like Julie Kaye, a 36-year-old moth-

er who has been the dynamo behind finding premises for a pre-school playgroup in the village of Cawthorne. She has managed to squeeze in - between her childcare and her evening job as a telephone banker with First Direct in Leeds - an impressive catalogue of fund-raising, lobbying and work on planning permission.

By the school gates, I asked would she ever think of becoming a councillor. She said she has not the time, but Mr Blair wants councils to abolish many of their time-wasting committees. She said the politics would put her off, but Mr Blair insists that "councils need to avoid getting trapped in the secret world of the caucus and the party group". Perhaps, then, she said, she might: "I've got the background, the education and the go - but I didn't know they needed me," she concluded disarmingly.

Less party politics is what Alao Sheriff wants too. "The politicians will never agree," he said. "If they do, political parties they will destroy their power base. But they could try and change the tone, so that skills rather than ideology dominate."

Such issues will now become matters of great debate even among the pro-Blair factions in local councils. "New Labour is the lesser of two evils," concluded Jack Brown, who now styles himself a Christian communist. "But not all Blair's ideas are sound. The notion of an elected mayor, for instance, might produce greater efficiency, but if you got the wrong man it would be a passport to corruption. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*" he concluded. In Barnsley, it seems, they speak of little else.

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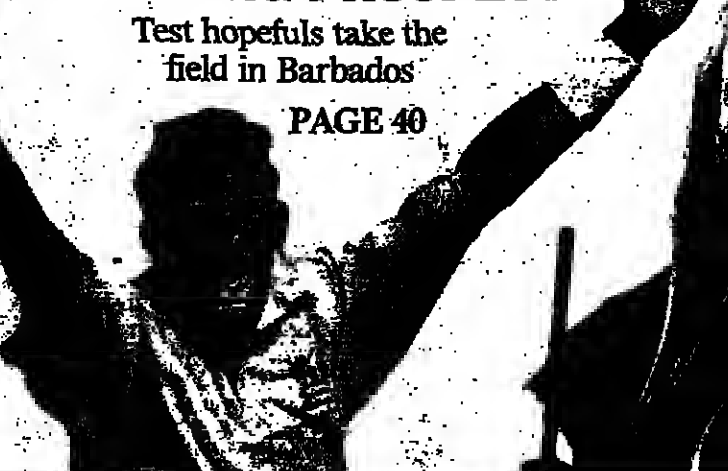
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PAGE 35



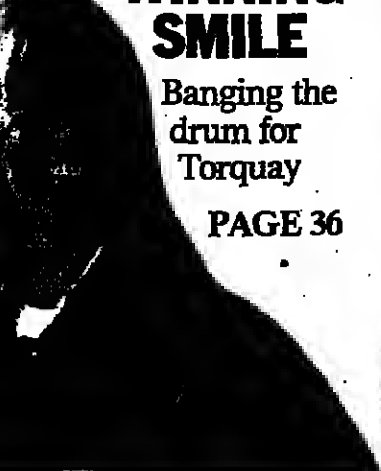
APPEALING PROSPECT

Test hopefuls take the field in Barbados
PAGE 40



WINNING SMILE

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PAGE 36



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PAGE 57

How clever can your family car get?
PAGE 45

THE TIMES SATURDAY SPORT

MARCH 7 1998

PLAYERS URGED TO IGNORE WOODWARD ULTIMATUM

Clubs push England to the brink

By DAVID HANDS AND MARK SOUSTER

ENGLISH rugby stands on the brink of a rupture the long-term consequences of which can only be imagined. The Rugby Football Union (RFU), the governing body of the game in England, has presented an ultimatum to its 12 leading clubs and, if no compromise is reached over the weekend, there is the real possibility of the most famous clubs in the country being expelled from the union.

The clubs, among them Bath, Wasps and Leicester, met in London yesterday and emerged united in their view that England should not tour the southern hemisphere this summer. If they hold that position, their players have already been told they will not be considered for international rugby as from Monday and their employers, the clubs, will be deemed to be in breach of International Rugby Board (IRB) regulations.

The expulsion of clubs could not be accomplished at the drop of a hat, but club officials are bracing themselves for such a decision. They believe that Cliff Brittle, chairman of the RFU management board, and Fran Cotton, his vice-chairman, seek to break the power of the clubs as a means of securing their assets, the leading players, on RFU contracts.

The whole sorry affair is the climax to a festering disagreement that has dogged English rugby since the game went professional in August 1995. A year ago both sides believed that a better relationship could be developed and, as recently as last autumn, Brittle said that the two sides had never been closer. However, the announcement since then of Cotton's vision of the future of the game in England shattered the fragile peace.

That vision, the clubs contend, would lead to their eventual contraction and, to reinforce the point, they have rejected overtures made by Brittle this week that would restore them to European competition next season. Those overtures, they claim, would leave them with only four Premiership games before Christmas next season while in the next season, thanks to the 1999 World Cup, domestic rugby would begin in February 2000.

That the issue that has brought matters to a head this week has been the RFU demands upon the leading players and the withdrawal by Northampton of players such as Tim Rodber and Paul Grayson from the scheduled tour to Australia, New Zealand and South Africa in June is almost coincidental. If it had not been that issue, it would have been another and Keith Burwell, the Northampton



Man in the middle: Dallaglio, like all the England players, is caught in the struggle between the clubs and the RFU for control of the game. Photograph: Marc Aspland. Shirts from Allsports

owner, now has the "bloody punch-up" that he thought would be required before the air cleared.

All 12 clubs stand together. "I have never known everyone so rock solid," Donald Kerr, chairman of English First Division Rugby (EFD), said. "We protested about this tour some time ago, about England playing four tests and three quasi-tests after a long hard domestic season but we were

requires England to play 12 internationals outside the Five Nations Championship over the five years of the agreement. If the summer tour goes ahead, England will have played eight within the first two years.

After their meeting the clubs confirmed their support for international rugby and their desire to honour existing release agreements on their players. "In the interests of the

to decide on their availability for the summer tour by Monday or forfeit international places for the remainder of the Five Nations this season. Lawrence Dallaglio, the England captain, said yesterday he was committed to the tour but denied that he had come to any long-term agreement with the RFU. "The players are stuck in the middle of a situation over which they have little real control."

"We believe that a summer's rest will be the best preparation for England in their endeavours to win the World Cup in 1999," Peter Wheeler, the Leicester chief executive, said. The RFU believes it is in the right legally and has suggested that many first division club contracts have not been registered with them, as IRB regulations require. All contracts have to be approved by the union and must include their unrestricted release for international duty.

There seems little prospect of any movement by either side over the weekend, though the union has called a press conference for Monday morning.

'It is amazing that we can avert war with Iraq but cannot sort out rugby'

Lawrence Dallaglio, page 41

given the same lame excuse about the RFU's contractual obligations."

The Times understands that contracts with the host unions in the southern hemisphere were signed little more than two months ago and the terms of the RFU's agreement with BSKyB, the satellite television station that is partially owned by News International, owner of The Times, only

players' welfare, the RFU should reconsider the southern hemisphere tour proposed this summer," they said. The clubs will meet their players next week to explain the stance they have taken.

They described the ultimatum given to the England training squad on Wednesday by Clive Woodward, the national coach, as provocative. Woodward asked the players

QUESTIONS OF LOYALTY

Q. Will England field a first-choice team against Scotland on March 22?
A. Not as things stand.

Q. Why?
A. If the players refuse to commit themselves on Monday to England's summer tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, coach Clive Woodward has said that he will not consider them for any future matches.

Q. Why won't the players commit themselves?
A. Because the clubs, their employers, are advising them not to. They want them to rest.

Q. Why do the clubs want them to rest?
A. Because the players are wanted for too many games. Rugby is the most physically demanding of team sports and leading players have been going non-stop for nearly two years.

Q. Why does Woodward want them to play?
A. Because his employers, the Rugby Football Union (RFU), see such tours as a means to improve England's play.

Q. Who will play for England against Scotland?
A. Players from outside the top division - effectively a fifth-string team.

Q. What happens now?
A. Nobody knows. This looks like the endgame of the 30-month struggle for control between the owners of the leading professional clubs and the traditional ruling body, the RFU.

Driven beyond endurance by the Shearer papers

At the publishing office of Hamish MacHoot on Tuesday morning, copy editor Jeremy Tadpole was sitting down to his daily grind, proof-reading the latest autobiography of Alan Shearer. "Blah, blah, blah," he said, bristling to himself, as a mental limbering-up exercise. "Ahem. Rhubarb, rhubarb, rhubarb."

Shearer's style was proving a bit of a challenge for a depressive narcoleptic like Tadpole. In publishing circles, they would call it Henry James without the roller-coaster effect. But Tadpole was not to be outdone. He drained his triple espresso, stretched his eyes, cracked his knuckles, sponged the back of his neck and began.

Tadpole woke with a start, his forehead in a pool of dribble. This was always happening. He'd been reading page 14 now for six weeks and it was becoming clear that absolutely nothing could keep him awake. Just yesterday, Boomer MacHoot had entered the room to find Tadpole nodding soundly over his desk, despite the sewing-needles he'd placed under the skin of his fingertips and the wire with which he'd ingeniously attached the needles to a series of battery packs. Sensing a problem, MacHoot had thrown a glass of water over him. "Still reading the Shearer, Jeremy?" he'd boomed.

"Aaaaah," Tadpole screamed. "Good man, Tadpole. We're relying on you." "Aaaaah, thank you, sir, Aaaaah." Now Tadpole flicked through the pages ahead, searching randomly for sensation of any sort. He was building up to a decision. "We

knew training would be tough," he read, with a sinking heart. "I have never even seen any of these supposed social drugs." "My leg hurt for quite some time." He stood up, opened the office window and climbed out. It was cold on the windy ledge; beneath him the grimy traffic roared and honked. This was an extreme measure, but effective.

Adrenaline coursed through Tadpole and he felt more awake than he could ever remember.

Afterwards, Boomer MacHoot helped the authorities to piece the accident together. "Never could fathom Tadpole," he told them. "Saw in the paper Alan Shearer supposed to have been in a fight in Dublin. A fight! Then the phone rings from Shearer's people, saying 'ignore it, nothing in it. Still, what a turn up! Naturally, I dashed in to Tadpole to give him the news. 'Shearer's done something interesting!' I call, as I enter.

"But funny thing, Tadpole isn't there. 'He's outside, for heaven's sake. Outside the window. He hasn't heard me. So I bang on the glass. 'Shearer?' I yell. 'News! Interesting!' He gives me a pained, puzzled expression. His Wallace and Gromit lips flaps frenziedly against his ear. 'Interesting?' he mouths at me, incredulous. 'Yes, very interesting,' I assure him.

"So he starts to climb back in and I keep talking, you know, the way you do. 'Of course, Shearer's denying it,' I say, leaning out and offering my hand. 'Everyone's saying nothing happened, so no need to change the book.'"

"Which is when he just looks at me one last time, closes his eyes, lets go of my hand and drops off the building. 'Tragic waste, really,' MacHoot says, gathering Tadpole's papers. 'Had Tadpole all lined up for David Platt's Bumper Book of Old Truisms after this. And now he'll never know.'"

LYNNE TRUSS

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Makes you want to hold your nose

The Ship of Fools is leaving on time this year and the usual stragglers are hanging about the jetty. The boat is always on the look-out for people who can make the journey that bit more interesting and he may have found a proper little mate in a woman by the name of Pilling, who represents the Football Supporters' Association.

Now, for all I know, Pilling may be a good sort, and a splendid turn at the Christmas party, if such an august body ever lowers its guard, but the performance she gave on BBC News the other day brought to mind Bertie Wooster, who inspected his mind and found that "it boggled".

Invited to comment on a silly piece in the *Daily Star*, which said that English fans should give the "Frogs" a good hiding this summer because the French authorities had bungled the allocation of World Cup tickets, Miss P got in a fearful baste. If anything unworldly happened over there, she spluttered, the *Star* would bear a heavy responsibility.

All right, the piece was infantile, but the poor dear needn't worry. To heed the paper's advice it is first necessary to be able to read, and the *Star* supplies evidence daily that not everybody can. If she really thinks that newspapers can prod otherwise well-behaved people into "acting up" on foreign soil, then she has not absorbed the violent lessons of the past 25 years.

The view that if fans can't get tickets then trouble will follow, and the troublemakers cannot be held responsible for the mayhem, is the

MICHAEL HENDERSON



kind of tosh that finds favour with the new tribe of "analysts". To a person they seem oddly ignorant of the fact that a significant minority of supporters will cause trouble, wherever they go — and, as night follows day, they will always blame somebody or something else: too much hospitality, lenient policing, heavy-handed policing. There will be trouble in France this summer for one simple reason: plenty of "fans" will leave these shores intent on causing it.

Nobody who watches football regularly in this country can doubt that many of the people they share the grounds with are, at best, laudatorial; at worst, criminal. Tele-

vision, that promiscuous bedmate of the professional game, may try to kid viewers that "the atmosphere is terrific", but those who watch football live know better. Much of the time it is mephitic.

At Leeds last Saturday a city-centre pub hosted a knot of fans who chanted "no surrender to the IRA", and belaboured the horrible chant about the Munich air crash. A friend who watched Manchester United away to Chelsea endured supporters abusing Irwin (he's Irish), Schmeichel (he's good), Cole (he's black), Sheringham (he used to play for Spurs) and Beckham (he goes out with somebody famous, apparently). "At the end of the game, I felt defiled," my friend said. "I wanted to read a book, or look at some paintings, just to remind myself I was human."

In the late Sixties, that wonderful man John Arlott gave up reporting football because, as he put it, "the game became seedy". Many years later he told me: "There are some good men in football but they're outnumbered about 200 to one."

Football didn't bother then about driving men like Arlott from the game and it doesn't bother now. It has sponsors to bow to it, television executives to scrape and a few thousand troglodytic fans to belch approval, so it swaggers about like a playground bully.

It's a wonderful game, football, despite everything. It's just a pity that so many of the people who play, manage, administer and watch it make you want to hold your nose. Come on, Miss Pilling, let's get you in that boat.



The slings and arrows of outrageous comment

Michael Atherton is one of nature's Horatios who, Shakespeareans will recall, earned Hamlet's commendation for being "a man that fortune's buffets and rewards have ta'en with equal thanks". He is not greatly moved by praise, or deflected by criticism, and as he has just become the first man to captain England in 50 Tests, he could be said to have triumphed over those who are less constant.

He would be less than human, however, were he not to blanch from time to time at the stuff that is written about him and the team he leads. Two weeks ago, when England won a dramatic Test in Trinidad to square the series at 1-1, he was a pukka chap, a glorious leader. Now, depending on which paper you read, he is "Captain Calamity" and "flop Atherton".

Of course, he was entirely to blame for the defeat in Guyana, which again puts England on the

back foot: he lost the toss; the silly mool Anyway, when fielders drop catches as England did, there isn't a right lot the poor old skipper can do.

Being a Test captain is no job for faint hearts. Sachin Tendulkar, the finest batsman in the world, admitted defeat after little more

than a year of leading India. Even Mark Taylor, a brilliant captain, had a terrible time of it until he found some form last summer. In his case, Australia were good enough to carry him through. How good would Atherton be if he had Shane Warne to bowl for him? The most mysterious captain's business of all concerns Wasim Akram, who surrendered the Pakistan job to protect his family, after receiving death threats, and then found himself demoted from the team altogether. Wasim, the greatest bowler of his kind in the history of the game! Belatedly called up to South Africa, he returned to their side yesterday with this ringing endorsement from a team-mate: "We don't need him."

So, here are two wishes for the coming week: Michael Atherton to make a hundred and England to win in Barbados; Wasim Akram to scatter South African stumps all over Port Elizabeth.

Noble cause demanding respect of rugby folk

Paul Ackford has turned in his rugby jersey for a word processor more nimbly than most former players but he got one thing spectacularly wrong last week. What the blazes are England doing playing the other British teams, he wanted to know, when they could be testing themselves against South Africa and the All Blacks?

Leaving aside for a moment the fact that England went through a full-scale international engagement before Christmas, is he seriously urging the abandonment of the Five Nations Championship? This is an annual ritual dedicated to the noble cause of cheering us all up and the churl wants to scrap it on grounds of (yes, you've guessed) "irrelevance".

Of course, if England care only about beating the best teams in the world, then it is in their interests to play sides from the southern hemisphere regularly. But if that is all the game means in the brave new professional world, it is an admission of defeat. There used to be a fellowship of rugby, irrespective of who happened to be the best side at any one moment, and if my experience of the recent Ireland-Scotland game is anything to go by, that fellowship survives even England and France's top-dogery.

Let's take Ackford at his word. If he really wants to cast aside the lower orders, he shouldn't be surprised if France, South Africa and New Zealand say to England: "Sorry, lads, but we really don't think you're up to playing us." The Five Nations may be a second-rate competition in global terms but, as England are a second-rate team, that is surely where they belong.

In Paris today, and at Wembley, which Wales must call home for the time being, the bonds of history will be renewed. Long may it be so. These weekends, which are primarily about sport, are also about the gifts of comradeship and friendly rivalry that sport bestows. However good or indifferent the match, there are plenty of compensations. Where would you rather spend a rugby weekend: Paris or Durban? Edinburgh or Brisbane? Dublin or Auckland? And no fibbing.

□ Danny Baker returns next week

Double-double Gary trouble

You might imagine that getting Santayana and Gary Newbon on the same page, never mind the same sentence, is beyond the wit of man. Think again. Every time Newbon appears on the box it is tempting to remember Santayana's observation of Rousseau's *Confessions*, that it mixed candour with ignorance of self in equal measure.

Newbon doesn't lack candour, that's for sure, though what he feels candid about is hard to define. His "questions" to Alex Ferguson after Manchester United's dreadful game in Monaco on Wednesday were: "You must have been proud of that battling performance." "Your Norwegian centre backs were marvellous tonight." "It was a good result tonight." In each case he made a statement de-

signed to flatter his subject, like a commoner craving a boon from a medieval monarch.

The ignorance of self is the easier bit by far, for Newbon clearly doesn't realise how absurd he appears. This is the man, after all, who once introduced himself to a stranger as "the most famous man in the Midlands" and now traps unwary footballers at the end of their 90 minutes when they have unremarkable thoughts to impart.

Why, in any case, do TV people think viewers must be taken "backstage" at a time when the participants are trying to come to terms with their performance. Nobody grabs Macbeth in the wings and says: "The witches did you proud tonight".

What? White have I done? Look out, Stratford! A man with an awful snirk is heading your way.

TENNIS

Graf setting out to regain position of dominance

AFTER only two competitive matches in nine months Steffi Graf finds herself in an unusual position, for the last time her ranking was as low as 194, when Liverpool won the European Cup.

When injury forced her to leave the circuit last June, she lost her position as No 1 but she still had that air of invincibility that 374 weeks at the top of the heap brings. Now the whippersnappers have taken over and Graf has to prove her worth all over again.

Still, the signs are good. She may be doing a passable impression of Greta Garbo and limiting her appearances to the bare minimum, but when she is out and about she appears relaxed and has even taken to cracking the odd joke.

Her knee seems to be holding up under the strain, although the State Farm Event Cup here is a hard-core tournament that should show just how well the injury has healed.

Her back, the cause of much anguish over the past couple of years, is better than it has ever been. But it is not all plain sailing, for Graf has come down with a cold as she prepares for her opening match, which will be against either Tamarine Tanasugarn,

FROM ALIX RAMSAY IN INDIAN WELLS, CALIFORNIA

of Thailand, or Maria Sanchez Lorenzo, of Spain.

Her sparring partners of old are not present — Arantza Sanchez Vicario and Mary Joe Fernandez have both withdrawn because of injury, while Monica Seles pulled out last week for "personal reasons". So Graf has been left on her own to deal with the new order.

One of their number, Mirjana Lucic, has practised with Graf a couple of times this week, meetings that drew crowds of several hundred.



Graf: favourable draw

BASKETBALL

Finch must paper over cracks

CHRIS FINCH, who appeared in three cup finals as a player with Sheffield Sharks and three Wembley play-off championships, faces his first final as the club's coach tomorrow with a weakened squad.

Ian McKinney will almost certainly miss the climax to the Uni-Ball Trophy against London Towers with a sprained ankle and the Sharks will probably go into the game at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham with two other players less than fully fit. McKinney's fellow England international, John Amaechi, has tonsillitis, the legacy of a

last week and Dean Hames, the American who shares some of the playmaking duties with McKinney, has a sprained elbow. Extra responsibility will be thrust upon the slim shoulders of Tyrell Myers, the third Sharks guard.

"All this may affect the way we play but we're deep enough to offset the damage," Finch said. If the Sharks had not been in contention for the Budweiser League title, Amaechi and Hames would have been pulled out of the league game away to Chester Jets last night.

Finch, who gave up playing

league's second-youngest coach. He will be looking for more joy than the youngest, Bob Donevaid, whose Leicester Riders squad lost the National Cup final seven weeks ago, but Finch will be up against the vastly experienced London Towers coach, Kevin Cadle.

The Towers have lost both league games to the Sharks this season but Cadle likes nothing less than to lose cup finals. If his squad's form in the league victory over the Tigers at Blackpool on Wednesday was anything to go by, the Towers are grimly determined to hold on to the trophy. It may well be all they

SPORT IN BRIEF

Pessoa puts paid to champion

■ **EQUESTRIANISM:** Rodrigo Pessoa, of Brazil, gained a stirring win on the French-bred Fidji du Fleury in the Prix des Ecoles, the opening event of the Paris-Bercy Volvo World Cup meeting, in Paris yesterday. Pessoa relegated the French national champion, Roger-Yves Bost, on Vale D'Or, to second place by 0.54sec (Penny MacArthur writes).

Geoff Billington was the best of the three Britons competing, finishing seventh on Virtual Village Niko. He used the class to school his leading horse, Irv Otto, for the World Cup qualifier tomorrow.

■ **HOCKEY:** After a 1-1 draw with Malaysia, the home nation, in the Sultan Azlan Shah tournament in Ipoh yesterday, England's hopes of a bronze medal play-off disappeared when Germany lost 3-2 to New Zealand.

Australia will meet Germany in the final tomorrow and New Zealand will play off for the bronze medal with South Korea, leaving England and Malaysia to contest the wooden spoon.

■ **CYCLING:** Chris Boardman, victim of a flu outbreak that has affected many of the leading teams in Europe, will not start in the eight-day Paris-Nice event tomorrow. His team asked him to stand down to help to accelerate his recovery.

■ **ROWING:** Nearly 250 eights will race from Mortlake to Putney in the 58th Women's Head this morning. Suzie Ellis, who earlier this week failed to be selected as the Cambridge University cox for the Boat Race, will steer Thames, the champions, in pursuit of her sixth Head victory.

■ **RUGBY LEAGUE:** Colin Myler yesterday resigned as chief executive of Super League Europe, complaining of his disillusionment 15 months after his appointment to head the commercial

EXCLUSIVE COMPETITION THE TIMES

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You could win a classic Ferrari 328 GTB by entering a team in our Fantasy Formula One competition which goes live with tomorrow's Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne. This dream machine has a top speed of 150mph and does 0-60 in 6.6 secs. Second prize is a trip for two to the 1999 Australian Grand Prix. Third prize is a trip for two to the 1999 Monaco Grand Prix. Entry lines are open now to register for the Brazilian Grand Prix at Interlagos on Sunday March 29 - the first of six races that carry up to 600 bonus points for correctly predicting any of

the first three drivers to finish. Choose your fantasy team with care. Bad driving and failing to finish will incur penalties.

Readers who have already entered the competition can obtain a comprehensive breakdown of their team's performance in tomorrow's race using our new faxback service which is available from Tuesday. For details of this service see The Sunday Times tomorrow.

Full details of the competition and terms and conditions were published in The Times on Monday.

HOW TO ENTER

Choose six drivers and six constructors, three from each of the four groups, left. Readers in the UK and Irish Republic can enter by calling the 24-hour hotline on 0891 40 50 01 (+44 990 100 311 RoI). Calls last about seven minutes and must be made using a Touch-tone telephone. Follow the instructions and tap in your 12 two-digit selections in turn. The order in which you register your first three drivers will be your predictions for the 1st, 2nd and 3rd finishing places for the Brazilian Grand Prix. You will then be asked to give your Fantasy Formula One team name (max 16 characters), together with your details. You will receive a 10-digit PIN as confirmation of your entry.

MAKE 3 SELECTIONS FROM EACH OF THESE FOUR GROUPS

GROUP A DRIVERS

01 Damon Hill 05 Jacques Villeneuve 09 Mika Hakkinen
02 Michael Schumacher 06 Olivier Panis 10 Jean Alesi
03 David Coulthard 07 Heinz-Harald Frentzen 11 Rubens Barrichello
04 Giancarlo Fisichella 08 Eddie Irvine

GROUP B DRIVERS

12 Alexander Wurz 16 Mika Salo 20 Ricardo Rosset
13 Ralf Schumacher 17 Pedro Diniz 21 Shinji Nakano
14 Jarno Trulli 18 Jani 22 Esteban Tuero
15 Johnny Herbert 19 Tori 23 Takagi

GROUP C CONSTRUCTORS

24 Williams 26 McLaren 28 Sauber 32 Tyrrell
25 Benetton 27 Jordan 30 Arrows 33 Minardi
29 Prost 31 Stewart

GROUP D CONSTRUCTORS

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0891 calls cost 50p per minute (standard tariffs apply to +44 990 calls).

طريقا من الامم

Kevin Eason in Melbourne sees the speedy return of an invisible man

Schumacher takes alternative route

We should have known better than to believe the man with the straightest face in sport. Two days ago Michael Schumacher breezed into town — the last driver to arrive for the Australian Grand Prix — and promptly announced there was little chance that he could win the first race of the season. Twenty-four hours later he scorching around the Albert Park circuit in the fastest practice time.

There was barely a hint of irony in his voice, not a flicker of a smile when he then announced afterwards that, actually, his Ferrari still needed to be developed before it would be ready to carry him to winning ways. It is impossible to see what is going on inside the German's head, to read the mood of the only driver of the present crop who warrants entry into the pantheon of Formula One. Saying that he has no chance is a deliberate diversion from a man who arrived here with a mild dose of flu but would have told his rivals he was suffering from yellow fever if he thought that it would give him a psychological advantage.

This week has been even more difficult than usual for Schumacher watchers, mainly because he has been close to invisible at a time when race drivers are usually omnipresent in newspapers, magazines and on television. Jacques Villeneuve, the world champion, has appeared on just about every news bulletin for the past five days.

Every interviewer has asked the same question: "What do you think of Michael Schumacher?" The German, it seems, overshadows the whole Formula One circus.



'It was great to start working again. Now I am just looking forward to racing'

Maybe Schumacher decided that absence might make hearts grow fonder. Maybe it was best to leave Villeneuve to do the talking about that incident in Jerez last season?

Schumacher is clearly tired of the subject, particularly when asked by one interviewer whether he would be prepared to cut Villeneuve off at a corner again, Schumacher replied: "Wait and see." Anything more could simply be twisted into yet another in a succession of rows.

Perhaps he was right, then, to lay low instead of presenting himself as a target for criticism, for the subject of his deliberate shunt into Villeneuve at the European Grand Prix — which led to him being stripped of his second place in the championship — seemed to have evaporated yesterday as the business of racing took over.

Words will not repair the damage to Schumacher's reputation, but watching him out on the damp circuit mastering a skittish Ferrari while others struggled it was difficult to mask admiration for a man so clearly a master of his craft, the best in the world.

"I had a long time off from driving, then started in January. It was great to start working again," he said. "As soon as I started, I loved the way the car handled and I felt the satisfaction from driving and now I am just looking forward to racing again," he said.

That is the essence of the man. Pundits here have been wondering whether he would have the same lust for victory since he recently acquired the duties of husband and father. Others sneer that the richest man in Formula One can afford to relax on the £20 million a year Ferrari are reportedly paying him. That is to misjudge him. At 29, he is at the peak of his powers and stands on the threshold of history if he can bring Ferrari its first world title since 1983.

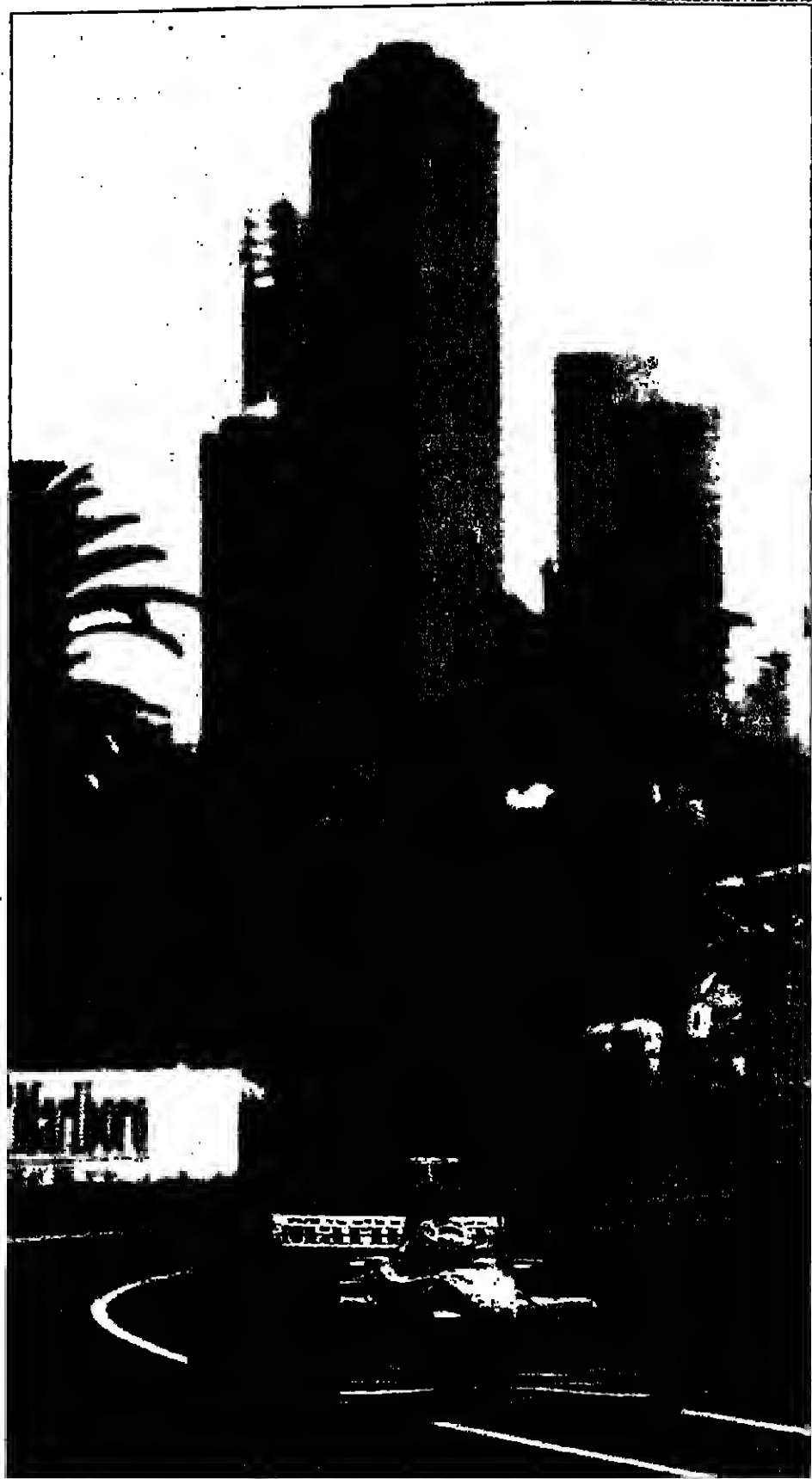
He has been with the team for two seasons and came close to the drivers' title last year in a car clearly inferior to the winning Williams.

This year, though, he has the new F300 developed by Rory Byrne and Ross Brawn, who guided him to his two world titles at Benetton, and the burden of the expectation of Luca de Montezomolo, the Ferrari chairman, who clearly believes that he is due a dividend from his massive investment in the German.

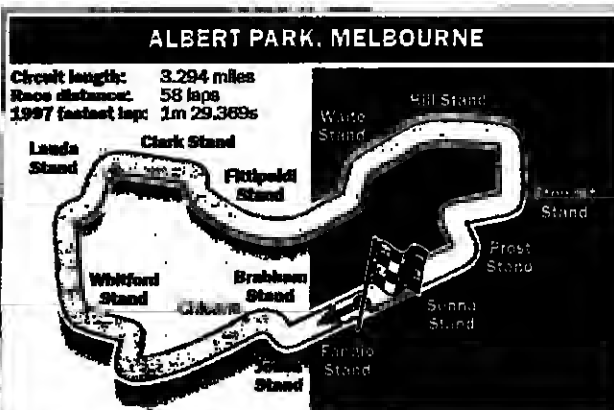
Schumacher still refused to talk up his chances yesterday. Chewing on an orange as he snuffed through his head cold, he said that the true form guide would only be written once the weekend was over.

"We know we have done a good job on the car," he said. "Whether it is good enough I am still not sure, but it's close and we are developing it all the time so I am sure we will get there."

Then again, why believe a word that the man says? Schumacher will, as usual, be at his most convincing on the track this year and there is every chance that memories of the villain of 1997 will be erased by the performances of 1998.



Towering performance: Schumacher begins to rebuild his reputation in Melbourne



Rivals attempt to put brake on new McLaren

FROM KEVIN EASON

THE first day of the Formula One season started with controversy as six teams joined forces to criticise a new brake system developed by the McLaren team.

Cars had barely turned a wheel before team managers were putting their heads together to complain about the design of the new McLaren. Much is expected of the Woking-based team and Mika Hakkinen and David Coulthard immediately obliged with fast practice times.

According to suspicious engineers in some team garages, their speed and poise could be partially attributed to a new braking system. A second pedal allows the drivers to control the amount of braking to both front wheels, enabling them to keep their cars balanced.

By last night the Stewart, Jordan, TWR, Arrows, Sauber, Benetton and Ferrari teams had signed a letter of protest to officials of the FIA, Formula One's ruling body. The FIA has already ruled the system legal, however, and showed no signs of backing down. There are thought to be other teams either with a similar system in place or in the process of developing one.

Ron Dennis, the McLaren managing director, said that plans for the designs were sent to the FIA for inspection and approved long before the cars went into production.

David Richards, head of the Benetton team, criticised the innovation because it could force other teams to follow suit, raising their costs as they battled to narrow McLaren's advantage. "If that happens, then we have a question of its validity," he said.

Significantly, Williams, who won the constructors' championship last season, have not signed up to the protest, which was apparently inspired by Ferrari. McLaren's arch rivals, if the McLaren continue to perform well here this weekend, the chances are high that an official complaint will be made, forcing the FIA to

review McLaren's designs. If Ferrari win, peace is likely to reign.

The pit-lane discussions were a distraction from the real action on the track, where Michael Schumacher proved that his chances here cannot be dismissed by topping the practice times and Hakkinen showed that he could be a dark horse in the championship.

Machinery was much on the mind of Damon Hill, too. His Jordan has a hand-operated clutch, a device he has been using for the first time — and rather ineptly, he

DETAILS

PRACTICE TIMES: 1, M Schumacher (Ger, Ferrari) 1:31.826; 2, M Hakkinen (Fin, McLaren) 1:34.432; 3, J Villeneuve (Can, Williams) 1:34.029; 4, M Wurz (Austria, Benetton) 1:35.270; 5, D Coulthard (GB, McLaren) 1:35.408; 6, R Schumacher (Ger, Jordan) 1:35.705; 7, J Herbert (GB, Sauber) 1:36.576; 8, J Alesi (Fr, Sauber) 1:36.665; 9, J Trulli (It, Prost) 1:36.231; 10, H Hakkinen (Fin, Williams) 1:36.741; 11, M Salo (Fin, TWR Arrows) 1:36.887; 12, R Barrichello (Br, Sauber) 1:37.025; 13, O Wurz (GB, Jordan) 1:37.162; 14, O Pironi (Fr, Prost) 1:37.162; 15, R Pons (Fr, Tyrrell) 1:37.144; 16, J Magnussen (Den, Stewart) 1:37.805; 17, E Irvine (GB, Ferrari) 1:37.881; 18, P Ditzel (Fr, TWR Arrows) 1:37.828; 19, T Takagi (Japan, Tyrrell) 1:38.517; 20, R Fittipaldi (Br, Benetton) 1:38.860; 21, S Nakano (Japan, Minardi) 1:39.044; 22, E Tuomi (Fin, Minardi) 2:10.509.

GRANDS PRIX TO COME: Tomorrow: Australia, Melbourne; Mar 22: Brazil, São Paulo; Apr 12: Argentina, Buenos Aires; Apr 26: San Marino, Imola; May 10: Spain, Barcelona; May 24: Monaco, Monte Carlo; June 7: Canada, Montreal; June 22: France, Magny-Cours; July 12: Great Britain, Silverstone; July 26: Austria, Zeltweg; Aug 2: Germany, Hockenheim; Aug 16: Hungary, Budapest; Aug 30: Belgium, Spa-Francorchamps; Sep 13: Italy, Monza; Sep 27: Luxembourg, Nürburgring; Nov 1: Japan, Suzuka.

candidly admitted yesterday. He was "getting the hang of it", he promised, managing to keep the engine running after a couple of early excursions into grass and gravel.

The day did not start too well either for Formula One's youngest competitor. Esteban Tuero, 19, took his Minardi out on to a Formula One track for the first time in the morning practice session and promptly came to grief at the fourth corner. The afternoon was hardly any better: just one lap completed. Things can only improve.

DRIVING FORCES 1998	
WINFIELD WILLIAMS Constructor titles: 9 Race wins: 103	1. Jacques Villeneuve Canadian Age: 26 Wins: 11
2. Heinz-Harald Frentzen German Age: 30 Wins: 1	
SCUDERIA FERRARI MARLBORO Constructor titles: 8 Race wins: 113	3. Michael Schumacher German Age: 29 Wins: 27
4. Eddie Irvine British Age: 32 Best placing: 2nd	
BENETTON FORMULA ONE Constructor titles: 1 Race wins: 27	5. Giancarlo Fisichella Italian Age: 24 Best placing: 2nd
6. Alexander Wurz Austrian Age: 23 Best placing: 3rd	
WEST McLAREN MERCEDES Constructor titles: 7 Race wins: 107	7. David Coulthard British Age: 27 Wins: 3
8. Mika Hakkinen Finnish Age: 28 Wins: 1	
JORDAN PEUGEOT Constructor titles: 0 Race wins: 0	9. Damon Hill British Age: 31 Wins: 21
10. Ralf Schumacher German Age: 22 Best placing: 3rd	
PROST PEUGEOT Constructor titles: 0 Race wins: 9	11. Olivier Panis French Age: 31 Wins: 1
12. Jarno Trulli Italian Age: 23 Best placing: 4th	
SAUBER PETRONAS Constructor titles: 0 Race wins: 0	14. Johnny Herbert British Age: 33 Best position: 4th
15. Jean Alesi French Age: 33 Wins: 1	
DANKA ARROWS Constructor titles: 0 Race wins: 0	16. Pedro Diniz Brazilian Age: 27 Best placing: 5th
17. Mika Salo Finnish Age: 32 Best placing: 5th	
STEWART FORD Constructor titles: 0 Race wins: 0	18. Rubens Barrichello Brazilian Age: 25 Best placing: 2nd
19. Jan Magnussen Danish Age: 24 Best placing: 7th	
TYRRELL FORD Constructor titles: 2 Race wins: 23	20. Toranosuke Takagi Japanese Age: 23 Debut
21. Ricardo Fuent Brazilian Age: 29 Best placing: 5th	
MINARDI TEAM Constructor titles: 0 Race wins: 0	22. Shinji Nakano Japanese Age: 26 Best placing: 15th
23. Esteban Tuero Argentinian Age: 19 Debut	

THE RACE ON TELEVISION AND RADIO
TV TELEVISION: Qualifying: Saturday 1.10pm, Race 1.55pm Sunday (live), 11.15pm Sunday (replay), 11.05pm Sunday (highlights)
RADIO 5 LIVE: 2.00am Sunday (live)

SOMETIMES YOU WISH IT WAS LESS

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FOOTBALL SATURDAY

David Powell on a team seeking their ninth consecutive win

Queen of Plainmoor relishes high life

If Torquay United had been as successful as the personalities in and around the club lately, there would have been little to worry about. Garry Nelson, best-selling author and Torquay player/assistant-coach last season, Helen Chamberlain, Sky football presenter and Torquay fanatic. So much publicity, so little to celebrate.

Suddenly, though, the locals are wondering if there is some mistake on the football map, similar to those which can be found in the new holiday brochure for neighbouring Teignmouth. A photo reversal shows the resort the wrong way round and a 700-year-old village moved from north to south of the river. Glance at the Nationwide League third division table and it looks upside down.

Torquay, instead of occupying their usual place at the southern end, are up north. Two seasons ago, they would have dropped out of the League had Stevenage Borough, the Vauxhall Conference champions, had their ground up to standard on time. Last season, Torquay finished only three points ahead of relegated Hereford United.

As Reg Longman, a Torquay supporter for 51 years, put it while watching the 1-0 victory over Cardiff City 1-0 on Tuesday: "I bet, at the start of this season, 95 per cent of supporters thought we would go down. We were poor last

year and we did not have a penny to spend." However, after a club-record eight successive league wins, the Gulls are flying. Victory over lowly Cambridge United today would edge them closer to the record of 14 consecutive League wins shared by Manchester United, Bristol City and Preston North End. Five of Torquay's next six matches are against opposition from the lower half of the table.

One worry, though: Kevin Hodges, the coach, has been named third division manager of the month for February. The last time Hodges received the award, 17 months ago, Torquay fell from sixth to 21st place.

Until this season, Hodges worked in a coaching team with Nelson, who drew on his experiences at Torquay to pen *Left Foot In The Grave*, his follow-up to *Left Foot Forward*. To Chamberlain, the graveyard has been an irresistible place. Co-host of *Soccer AM*, the four-hour Saturday morning programme on Sky Sports 2, she rarely misses a match, rushing straight from the studio.

Rushing so fast that she was trapped twice for speeding and banned. "The lady who does so much for Torquay United," the man on the mike said as Chamberlain strutted onto the pitch at half-time against Cardiff. She used to feed sea lions at Chessington World of Adventures, was a Bluecoat en-



Chamberlain rushes straight from the television studios to see Torquay United play

tertainer for Pontin's, but nothing has endured like her love of Torquay United. It began while she was working as a local disc jockey and she returned to her musical roots on Tuesday, phoning three fellow drummers to take their instruments into the

to have the club crest tattooed in a private place if the team reaches the play-offs, though she is hoping for automatic promotion. "Then I might get out of it," she said. Days such as these are rare in Torquay's history. There is not much to beat by way of

as chairman after abuse from supporters. Mervyn Bateson, Bateson's successor, said that little has changed in the way the club is run and that success has been built on collective spirit.

Such as when Leon Haggood was prevented from sharing in win bonuses, because he is an apprentice, and the other players had a whip-round; or when Rodney Jack, the club's leading scorer, heard that Torquay had rejected a £300,000 offer from Crewe Alexandra and shook Hodges's hand to thank him.

While the club has risen, and Hodges has groomed a winning team on a tight budget, the overdraft has been cut by 25 per cent to some £300,000. For the visit of Cardiff, it was a filthy night - howling wind and driving rain - and Bateson was not expecting a miracle at the gate.

"We have got sea one side and that is half our trouble," he said, explaining low attendances. "They do not come in by boat and it is a bit rough tonight."

Still, 3,358 arrived, just 15 months after gates had slipped dangerously close to three figures. With a bang on the drum, the Torquay ship kept a steady course. And all who sailed in her were looking forward, no doubt, to seeing the promised tattoo when they reach dock.

'Chamberlain has twice been caught speeding to matches'

stands at Plainmoor after a long abstinence. "I have rallied them back together tonight because the team was winning and we had been chewing our fingers," Chamberlain said. "Seven wins in a row and the crowd were quiet."

Chamberlain has promised achievement runners-up in the Sherpa Van Trophy final at Wembley in 1999, winning promotion at Wembley to the old third division in 1991.

Sad, then, that Mike Bateson, the club's owner, no longer attends matches and is trying to sell. He stood down

Toby Tyke and the mask of mystery

Mark Hodgkinson studies the case of the Oakwell mascot

As assignments go, it should be easy enough. It's not like asking Chris Sutton to autograph an England shirt or Gordon Strachan to list his favourite referees.

Toby Tyke, please, is the request. "Humm, now you're asking," is the response. Toby is the official mascot of Barnsley FC and, while the club is new additions to the FA Carling Premiership, Toby has been in the elite since he first strutted (walking is for clotted omelette) onto the Oakwell pitch four years ago.

Toby, see, is not one of those lightweight, fairy-cake mascots that shuffle apologetically along the perimeter fence. He is the authentic Yorkshire tyke - irreverent, energetic, drunk on life; if he's not barking in your face, he's barking at the moon.

His antics have made the front page of the *Daily Sport* and the club has twice issued missives calling for a tad more decorum. All the same, he is much loved at Oakwell; in fact, his colour photograph is in more demand at the Reds Superstore than most of the players.

If a superstar is measured by his degree of availability, Toby is Barnsley's answer to Prince or Bruce Springsteen. "You'll have to put the request to Michael," the receptionist said. Michael is Michael Spinks, the club's general manager/secretary no less, and self-appointed dog-handler. Calls to him remain unreturned and a trip to Oakwell proves fruitless despite Toby's presence at the ground. "He won't see you until Michael says it's OK," Spinks is on the phone and then has a meeting. It is all academic anyway, Toby has scarpers.

Finally, on Spinks's blind side, Toby is tracked down - only by phone, mind. "You won't put it in my real name will you?" he asked nervously. Instinctively, I ask him to wait while I draw the blinds and check the tip of my umbrella for unusual substances.

Anonymity is promised and The Artist Actually Known As Toby (TAAKAT) turns out to be a charming, guileless 19-year-old who, when not dressed as a dog, albeit one who stands on two legs and wears a football kit, works as a barber in Barnsley. "The mascot job is great for me," he explained. "I like messing about and acting the part. When I go out with my mates on a Friday night there's always someone losing an eyebrow or something."

His notoriety owes much

LIFE AT THE TOP



to a toilet roll, a toilet gesture and a set of Manchester City supporters who had had their noses rubbed in it once too often for their liking.

"They said I dropped my trousers but I didn't," he pleaded. "I just wiped my backside that's all and the City fans got a right monk on." A "monk", incidentally, is Barnsley's answer to a religious persuasion and a Howard Kendall haircut.

Amid the tabloid furor, Toby almost resigned, in appropriately melodramatic fashion. "They were writing all this stuff and I thought 'bugger it'. I was going to take my head off in the middle of the pitch." By "my head", he really meant Toby's head, of course; the groundsmen "might" have complained otherwise.

His other misdemeanour saw him knock off a policeman's helmet during Barnsley's on-pitch promotion party last season. "He wrote

a letter to the paper and said I'd set a bad example and all the kids would start doing the same thing now," he said. Horror videos, violent computer games, Toby Tyke - their influence should be monitored.

Most of the time, Toby is a lovable rascal and his adoration is such that he is invited to birthday parties around the town. "I've seen other mascots and they're not a patch on me. They don't do half the stuff I do," he said. Lofty the Lion, Bolton Wanderers' furry talisman, is similarly triumphant. I proffer, Toby has more portentous news on the Lofty front. "I heard he got pork pies thrown at him at a recent match. You've got to watch that. It's important to know just how to treat the away fans."

One imagines a special relationship between a man and his mascot. When the performance is over and the suit is propped up lifeless and still, is there a moment of quiet reflection? "You're too knackered to feel it. It's hard work in that suit, you sweat a right lot." The suit is due for replacement soon and the new one will be a different hue of brown. The children who watch his every swagger will be informed that Toby has had a bath and is showing his true colours.

The Artist Actually Known As Toby does not receive payment for his services, but has a seat reserved in an executive box. The offer of wages would be declined anyway: he's delighted to walk the hallowed turf and to support the club in such a unique way. He has two scrapbooks filled with cuttings about Toby Tyke and his bedroom wall is a shrine to this man-sized dog.

A photograph, perhaps of TAAKAT in the half-light next to his suit, would at least show there is someone in there. The request is turned down. A local hack offers empathy. "I found myself saying to someone at the club, 'come on, you know as well as I do that there is a bloke in there.'"

There is indeed a bloke in there, but such is the enigma surrounding Toby Tyke, he may soon prefer to linger outside the butchers rather than the barbers. The staff at Barnsley should be afraid, very afraid, of meddling with half-man, half-dog legends.



Toby Tyke: more than a figure of fun

Vialli's tactical triumphs prove more than beginner's luck

Napoleonic would have made Gianluca Vialli a marshal. His well-known question, before promoting any of his generals, was: "Is he lucky?" And Vialli, in his first four matches as player-manager of Chelsea, seems to have proved that, on the big occasions at least, the force is with him.

In the Coca-Cola Cup, Arsenal, who should have annihilated Chelsea at Highbury but won only 2-1, were brushed aside in the return at Stamford Bridge. Vialli's first game in charge, and Chelsea were at Wembley.

After two mediocre league performances, against Leicester City and Manchester United, on to Seville, where pessimism among the travelling press corps about the outcome of the Cup Winners' Cup game seemed endemic, though nothing in Real Betis's own league form suggested they were monsters.

There was scepticism, too, about Vialli's credentials as a manager. In his native Italy, after all, he would not even be allowed on the bench because he has not gained the requisite certificate.

Is he, as the sceptics think, a cynical appointment, a little like that of his flamboyant predecessor, Ruud Gullit, put there largely for his symbolic value, the great player who might attract other such stars



showed himself remarkably shrewd, craftily engaging in what the Italians call *pre tattica*, the art of confusing your opponents before a match. Yes, he assured us, before we set off from Heathrow, 4-3-3 would be the pattern. The implication being that he would again figure up front, with Zola and either Mark Hughes or Tore Andre Flo. No word of Eddie Newton who, in the event, would play in midfield.

Among those critics closest to Chelsea, the very concept of 4-3-3 is a debatable one. There are those who believe that, despite a famous win against Wimbledon in the FA Cup

great tradition of 3-5-2, which he had so carefully inculcated in every one of the club's teams.

Vialli insisted after the victory on Thursday that Chelsea had played 4-3-3 of a sort, thanks to the immense energy and versatility of Dan Petrescu, who when not asserting himself in attack, dropped back to bolster the midfield. But you might take that with a pinch of salt.

Effectively, it was 4-4-2 with Flo the essential joker in the pack. "I feel I can do something if I play," Flo said and proved as good as his word.

Where Chelsea could logically have been expected to threaten Betis in the air, where the Spaniards have been so weak all season, Flo ripped through their defence at ground level, scoring twice in 13 minutes and leaving Betis a demoralised side for the rest of the first half.

Tore was in great condition and he played well in France for Norway," Vialli said, "and I was sure he was going to play great." But no one could be sure that his contribution could be as "great" as that.

Indeed, after he had exploited Ollas's horrific slip to score the second Chelsea goal, he virtually faded from view; but who could blame him? By the same token, who could ever have imagined that Mark Hughes would

immediately after he had arrived as a substitute, and barely five minutes from time? It was a miss that so nearly enabled Betis to save the game. The left flank of Chelsea's defence was caught out and Finidi George had time to cross to the ever-threatening Alfonso, whose header was firm and accurate but still not good enough to beat Ed de Goey, who made such a dramatic save.

Still, had Chelsea been given the penalty that they probably deserved four minutes from half-time, instead of having Zola booked, all this might have been academic.

What is it about Zola and referees? In the 1994 World Cup, coming on as a substitute for Italy against Nigeria, he was sent off in short order and for no good reason by an inept Mexican.

This time, when the big Yugoslav, Vidakovic, brought him down in the penalty area, Artanas Ouzounov, the largely efficient Bulgarian referee, added insult to injury, not only denying Zola a penalty but booking him for diving. "I can't believe he got booked for it," Graham Rix, the Chelsea coach, said. Vialli insisted: "This is only the first part of the match, we have 90 minutes more to play in London. This game is not over." There indeed may



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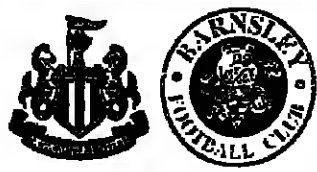
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FOOTBALL SATURDAY

FA CUP QUARTER-FINALS



NEWCASTLE UNITED
v
BARNSELY
Tomorrow, 5.0 (sold out)



Oliver Holt
If the reports from Dublin are accurate, Newcastle appear to have devoted much of their preparation for the game tomorrow evening knocking lumps out of each other during a brief sojourn in Ireland. There has been talk of headlocks, right hooks and the hurling of traffic cones. Some might say it is just the right kind of lunacy they need for a muscular quarter-final tie against Barnsley.

The Yorkshire side, who have moved up to the edge of the Premiership relegation zone, bundled Manchester United out of the FA Cup in the last round with a physical display at Oakwell that caused the champions to lose their cool collectively. Barnsley are rallying now, improving with every game and such are the troubles at St James' Park that it is still anyone's guess who will progress to the semi-finals.

If Newcastle can put the spat between Alan Shearer and Keith Gillespie behind them and rely on the Northern Irishman to supply the crosses that the

England captain thrives on, then Kenny Dalglish's team should be marginal favourites to go through, if only because of home advantage.

With Gary Speed in to bolster the midfield and Shearer gradually recovering his fitness, Dalglish must be hoping for some late season improvements to add a gloss to what has been a desperately disappointing season. The FA Cup represents his last opportunity to salvage something from his ruins and the pressure on him and his team will be intense.

Barnsley are in the mood to profit from any uncertainties in their opponents. They seem to have got their second wind, at last, to have found their feet in the top division and their win over United has bred new confidence in them.

John Hendrie, who scored in both ties against United, appears rejuvenated alongside Ashley Ward. Darren Barnard has proved he has one of the sweetest left feet in the league on the left flank; Neil Redfern is a fine anchoring player at the heart of midfield and Clint Marcelle and Martin Bullock can cause problems running at defences.

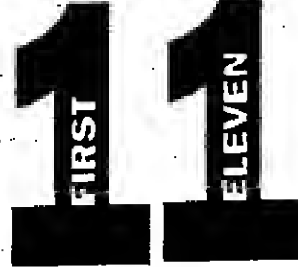
The tie has got the makings of a vaudeville classic. There is something about it, a feeling, a hunch, that whoever wins will go on to lift the Cup.

NEWCASTLE UNITED (3-5-2): S. Given — S. Watson, O. Forster, S. Pearce — W. Barton, K. Gillespie, G. Speed, R. Lee, A. Pollock — A. Anderson, A. Shearer.
BARNSELY (3-5-2): O. Watson — A. de Zeeuw, N. Eaden, S. Jones — M. Bullock, O. Marcelle, N. Redfern, E. Trinder, O. Barnard — J. Hendrie, A. Ward.
Referee: N. Berry.

■ **TELEVISION:** Tomorrow: Live on Sky Sports 2, from 4pm.
■ **PREDICTION:** Newcastle to end another romance.



Wild Rovers: Batty and Le Saux are kept apart by Sherwood during Blackburn Rovers' spectacular retreat from Moscow

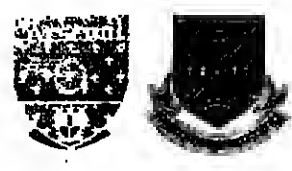


BROTHERS IN ARMS

Alan Shearer and Keith Gillespie may not be the first players to find dressing-room harmony elusive. Here are 11 pairs of teammates who discovered a new meaning to "hitting it off".

1. David Hirst and Benito Carbone
"I preferred you with your hair long," Hirst allegedly said to Carbone and all hell broke loose.
2. Martin Buchan and Gordon Hill
Buchan fulfilled the wishes of every non-Man U fan in the country when he clipped the original "Cockney Red" around the ear.
3. Graeme Le Saux and David Batty
A cold night in Moscow was warmed considerably when the Blackburn pair resorted to fistfights to settle a dispute about the date of the Russian Revolution.
4. Mike Flanagan and Derek Heise
The Charlton front men were sent off after they became overheat during a Cup tie against Maidstone at The Valley.
5. Bruce Grobbelaar and Steve McManis
"Now exactly whose fault was it that we conceded that goal?"
6. Graeme Hogg and Craig Levine
An argument over a delusional mix-up during a friendly (it led to both men being sent off, Hogg being shown the red card while he lay on a stretcher).
7. Eric Cantona and Bruno Martini
Long before Matthew Simmons, Eric took it out on his own keeper at Auxerre.
8. Tosh McKinley and Henrik Larsson
Another disagreement over hairstyles, this time at Celtic.
9. Brian Laws and Ivano Bonetti
The Italian was in stitches at the Grimsby player-manager's half-time oratory.
10. Neil Ruddock and Robbie Fowler
"I'm the only fouler at this club," Neil said.
11. John Fashanu and Lawrie Sanchez
Sanchez alleged that Fash had used martial arts techniques to attack him. Good job it was before Gladiators.

Compiled by Richard Whitehead



ARSENAL
v
WEST HAM UNITED
Tomorrow, 3.0 (sold out)



Rob Hughes
Any team capable of putting Blackburn Rovers out of the FA Cup demands respect, but Harry Redknapp's headache is whether he can field a West Ham United side remotely resembling the real thing for the quarter-final at Highbury. Even allowing for managerial disinformation, West Ham are down to the bare bones.

After the dull draw between the clubs last Monday — blamed on the Upton Park morass — Arsenal have home ground plus the return of Dennis Bergkamp, whose back pain has eased and whose invention is decisive. Additionally, Ray Parlour's strained hamstring feels better each day. So Arsenal are in reasonable shape despite the continued absence of Scamman, Bould and Wright.

West Ham's fortunes rest between the registration office, the medical room and the sin bin. Trevor Sinclair is Cup-tied, John Hartson's discipline rules him out for three games and, though Samassi Abou returns after his four-match ban for manhandling a referee, he might run the gauntlet of Adams and Keown alone tomorrow.

Redknapp, the manager, could ask Paul Kitson, again, to sacrifice himself for the cause, but that goes against advice that Kitson's adductor muscle needs a month to six weeks of rest and rehabilitation. The alternative, Lee Hodges, is 5ft 5in, born locally and bursting for more than ten minutes to make his name but surely too inexperienced to be thrown to the Arsenal heavies in the week of his twentieth birthday.

The West Ham defence is also suffering. Craig Forrest, the Canada goalkeeper, might reclaim his place from Bernard Lama but Tim Breacker is unfit, Rio Ferdinand doubtful and David Unsworth, unhappy at speculation that he and his wife are homesick for Merseyside, under treatment for a ligament injury.

Consequently, West Ham will pack midfield, where John Moncur is ready to resume and Eyal Berkovic is fortunate that Emmanuel Petit's appalling late tackle on Monday missed his shins.

ARSENAL (probable 4-4-2): A. Haringey — L. Dixon, A. Adams, M. Keown, N. Winterburn — R. Parlo, P. Vela, E. Pelt, M. Overman — O. Bergkamp, N. Anelka.
WEST HAM UNITED (probable 3-5-1-1): C. Forster — S. Potts, I. Pearce, O. Unsworth — A. Hodges, S. Lums, J. Moncur, E. Berkovic, S. Lums — P. Lums — S. Abou.
Referee: M. Reed.

■ **TELEVISION:** Tomorrow: Live on ITV, from 2.35pm.
■ **PREDICTION:** Bergkamp to make the difference.



Russell Kempson
It is a tale of everyday Yorkshire folk; a tale of confusion, bitterness and re-creation, of unbridled passion and broken promises, of accusation and counter-accusation. No, not Emmerdale, but Sheffield United FC and plc, where fact has merged with fiction this week and created a troubled backdrop to their FA Cup quarter-final at Highfield Road this afternoon.

In the first episode, Nigel Spackman, the United manager, resigned his job, after only nine months, in protest at what he considered was lack of support from the boardroom. Episode two included United surrendering their unbeaten home record in the Nationwide League first division, when they lost 1-0 against Ipswich Town, and the resignation of Mike McDonald, the chairman, after he had incurred the wrath of the fans.

Episode three has seen Mike McCabe, a director, try to reconstruct the chain of command at Bramall Lane, at the same time as the plc announced a loss of £3.1 million for the six months to December 31. The twist in the plot came when it was revealed that Spackman may return now that McDonald, who curiously accused Spackman of "lack of bottle", has stepped down.

"Drama only lasts a few hours or days," McCabe said yesterday. "If people have abilities in team management and professional management, they can soon overcome dramas, get back



COVENTRY CITY
v
SHEFFIELD UNITED
Today, 3.0 (sold out)

to work and start enjoying it again. Nigel conducts himself well. He's a sensible chap and has been prepared to listen. Board members recognise with hindsight that maybe things could have been handled differently. We're in discussions at present with possible appointees for the position of team manager and they include Nigel."

Though clearly making plans for Nigel, United will still have Steve Thompson as acting manager against a Coventry City side seeking its eighth successive victory in league and cup. Thompson will be without Dean Saunders and Roger Nilsen, because of injury, and also Ian Rush, Shaun Derry and Jon Cullen, who are Cup-tied.

COVENTRY CITY (probable 4-4-2): S. Okechukwu — R. Nelson, O. Duffin, G. Brown, M. Hill — N. Whelan, P. Vella, G. Bostons, T. E. Solomons — O. Hatcher, V. McDonald.
SHEFFIELD UNITED (probable 4-4-2): A. Kelly — C. Sheen, O. Hatcher, I. Sandford, W. Cullen — V. Bockorke, N. Marler, R. Ford, G. Stuart — G. Taylor, M. Marlow.
Referee: S. Dunn.

■ **TELEVISION:** Today: Match of the Day, BBC1 10.25pm, extended highlights.
■ **PREDICTION:** Coventry cruise to eighth successive win.



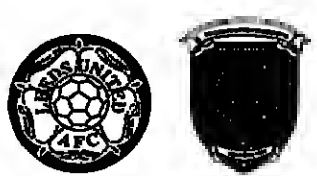
Oliver Holt
On Wednesday Leeds heaped more trouble on the already rounded shoulders of Christian Gross, when they pushed Tottenham Hotspur towards the foot of the Premiership. Today, at Elland Road, they will send Wolverhampton Wanderers into crisis if they knock them out of the FA Cup.

Wolves' hopes of making the Nationwide League first division play-offs suffered a cruel blow on Wednesday when they were denied a home victory against the bottom club, Stoke City, by a last-minute, scrambled equaliser. More and more, it looks as though the Cup is their last chance of achieving any tangible reward for this season.

They will gain some encouragement from Leeds' surprise exit from the Coca-Cola Cup at the hands of Reading before Christmas, but George Graham's side have not lost their reputation for obduracy and they must be the favourites to go through to the semi-finals.

In attack, Rod Wallace and Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaink have rediscovered their form and now that the highly rated Harry Kewell has returned from all manner of adventures with Australia, he has given the Yorkshire side more options going forward.

Their goalkeeper, Nigel Martyn, has been displaying uncharacteristic uncertainty recently, with crucial errors against Newcastle United and Southampton in successive



LEEDS UNITED
v
WOLVERHAMPTON WAND
Today, 3.0 (sold out)

matches and, in Dougie Freedman and Steve Bull, Wolves have strikers who could cause him more problems.

Keith Curle has been playing through the pain of a foot injury in defence but Wolves can rely on the precocity of Robbie Keane, the 17-year-old Irish midfielder who was given a trial with Leeds two years ago but was ignored and signed for Mark McCosker instead.

"He plays the game like a kid," Mick McCarthy, the Ireland manager, said of Keane. "It is as if he has gone on the field with his mates, put the jumpers down and just got on with it. But over and above that, he's got ability and an eye for goal and while at his size he gets muscled out of it occasionally, he's not shy of mixing it."

LEEDS UNITED (4-4-2): N. Martyn — A. Maybury, R. Mullen, M. Nelson, I. Harte — G. Halls, L. Bowyer, G. Hopkin, N. Kewell — J. F. Hasselbaink, R. Wallace.
WOLVERHAMPTON WANDERS (4-4-2): M. Stowell — K. Maccall, K. Curle, O. Richards, L. Naylor — O. Robinson, R. Keane, S. Gibson, M. Aldred — S. Bull, D. Freedman.
Referee: P. Dunn.

■ **TELEVISION:** Today: Match of the Day, extended highlights.
■ **PREDICTION:** Leeds to win.



LIVERPOOL
v
BOLTON WANDERERS
Today, 3.0 (sold out)



David Maddock
It has been an interesting week at Anfield, with Steve Harkness the centre of much attention. The Liverpool players, of course, do not believe the allegations against him, but it has not stopped the practical jokes at his expense.

Behind the joking, however, there are doubts about Stan Collymore's motives, brought into sharp focus by a telephone call from the Aston Villa man to a Liverpool player. Collymore suggested that he had not gone to the press with his allegations and, further, had not said the things attributed to him. The forward was not exactly popular in his time at Anfield and there is a feeling around the Merseyside club that this could be his revenge.

Whatever, Harkness will keep his place against Bolton Wanderers today: Liverpool need to show support to their under-fire defender.

Neil Ruddock is slowly returning to fitness, after a heavy Christmas, but is unlikely to figure. Instead, Roy Evans will pin what little faith he has left in the players who lost at Villa Park, with the possible exception of a rare start for Patrick Berger.

There is a danger of Liverpool slipping quietly out of even the reckoning for a UEFA Cup place. For Bolton, the danger is rather more serious. They are firmly anchored in the bottom three and appear to lack the means to do anything about it.

They are still squirming about the decisions that cost them valuable points at Tottenham Hotspur last week, but then whoever heard of a team at the bottom having outrageous good fortune? All Collin Todd can do is restore Scott Sellars after suspension — and offer up a little prayer.

LIVERPOOL (probable 4-4-2): B. Friedel — R. Jones, J. Conroy, S. Markens, S. Barmby — S. McManis, J. Redknapp, P. Jones, P. Berger — K. Redknapp, M. Owen.
BOLTON WANDERS (probable 4-4-2): K. Branagan — N. Cox, J. Fardough, A. Todd, G. Bergerson — J. Pollock, P. Fothergill, A. Thompson, S. Sellers — N. Bates, O. Hackett.
Referee: K. Burge.

■ **TELEVISION:** Today: Match of the Day, extended highlights.
■ **PREDICTION:** Home win.



Keith Pike
Manchester United may be delighting in their new image as the self-styled "hot-draw specialists of Europe," but it was not a lack of money or ambition that got them there in the first place and normal service should be resumed at Old Trafford this afternoon as the champions look to extend their 11-point lead in the FA Cup Premiership.

"It's given me an idea," Ron Atkinson, in his role as ITV pundit, said on Wednesday as he watched United grind and lump their way to a goalless draw in Monte Carlo. "I'll see if we can get a car park built under the pitch for Saturday."

The Sheffield Wednesday manager has every right to be fearful. A 6-1 hammering that Wednesday sustained at Old Trafford on November 1 split the end of the road for David Pleat, his predecessor as manager, who was



SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY
v
MANCHESTER UNITED
Today, 3.0 (sold out)

dismissed two days later. Neither can Atkinson bank on United suffering one of those post-European Cup hangovers that used to afflict them. Just as Alex Ferguson's team have learnt the value of a more pragmatic approach on their continental travels, so they have tended to show no ill-effects next time out.

Last season they won just three of their eight league games after such exertions; this season only Arsenal have managed to capitalise, with the other five opponents failing to register a

single goal between them. United have kept 16 clean sheets in 28 league games to boot, although Schmeichel will not be able to try to add another. The goalkeeper failed a fitness test yesterday, but Beckham and Gary Neville are expected to play. Irwin is definitely out, joining Pallister and Giggs.

Atkinson, who has Hyde suspended and Rudi doubtful, cannot afford such luxuries, although after the 3-0 defeat away to Derby County last Saturday — "maybe the worst performance by any team I have managed" — it would be surprising if Booth and Magilton were not recalled.

SHEFFIELD WEDNESDAY (probable 4-3-1-2): K. Pressman — E. Barnes, J. Newson, D. Walker, A. Hinchcliffe — J. Magilton, P. Atkinson, M. Pennington — S. Cantona — A. Booth, J. A. Cantona.
MANCHESTER UNITED (probable 4-3-1-2): R. van der Grint — G. Neville, H. Berg, J. Johnson, P. Neville — O. Beckham, P. Scholes, A. Butt — E. Shearman — A. Cole, O. G. Solis.
Referee: G. Barber.

■ **TELEVISION:** Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights.
■ **PREDICTION:** United win again; Atkinson keeps job nonetheless.



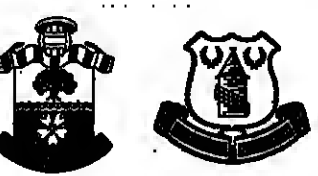
Brian Glanville
For Southampton the good news and for Everton the bad news is that Ferguson will play no part in this game.

Guess what: he is suspended, which must be a relief for Lundekvam, the Southampton centre back, who has recovered from flu in time to play.

Beresford, signed recently for Newcastle United, will be making his home debut not far along the coast from where he made his name with Portsmouth. Beresford's arrival at The Dell will be welcomed, for he has shown he can score goals as well as playing as an out-and-out defender.

Southampton suffered from silly defensive errors in the recent home defeat by Coventry City. That, and the decision to keep Le Tissier on the bench till far too late.

Southampton's icon has come back to form superbly and is certainly worth consideration by



SOUTHAMPTON
v
EVERTON
Today, 3.0 (sold out)

an England team that so pitifully lacked midfield flair and invention against Chile, the one proviso being that the team must be built around Le Tissier and that takes time, which was not given when Hoddle suddenly threw him in that night at Wembley against Italy.

Up front, Hirst and Ostendstad are dovetailing nicely. Hirst having got the winning goal last Saturday away to Leeds United.

It is as well for Everton that their grand old warhorse, Watson, should return in defence,

having refused a transfer to Manchester City. What possessed Everton to decide to release him at the end of this season?

Barnby, recovered from a groin strain, will also be back. Until recently, this undeniably gifted footballer has been under something of a cloud, but he is emerging and could make bullets for Maier, the France forward, and the quick, powerful Cadamarteri, who is always good to see.

In midfield, Hutchison has arrived from Sheffield United, but Southampton surely have the edge. Southall's successor, Myhr, could be kept busy in the Everton goal.

SOUTHAMPTON (probable 4-4-2): P. Jones — J. Dodd, G. Lundekvam, R. Dryden, F. Beresford — C. Palmer, M. Galloway, M. Le Tissier, J. Beresford — O. Hirst, E. Ostendstad.
EVERTON (probable 3-5-2): T. Myhr — O. Watson or C. Short, S. B. C. — T. Myhr — N. Wards, O. Hutchison, G. Ferry, M. Ball — O. Cadamarteri, M. Maier.
Referee: O. Elway.

■ **TELEVISION:** Today: Match of the Day, brief highlights.
■ **PREDICTION:** Southampton to win.



CHELSEA
v
ASTON VILLA
Tomorrow, 3.0 (sold out)

the English flag into Europe. Chelsea gained a good win over Real Betis in Seville on Thursday in the Cup Winners' Cup and Villa will live in hope of overturning their single-goal defeat in Spain by Atlético Madrid in the UEFA Cup.

John Gregory, plucked from obscurity to replace Brian Little, and with a record that hardly inspires confidence, made an encouraging start last week when two goals from Stan Collymore accounted for Liverpool (one a deflection, the other from a rebound that almost hit him).

The reverberations of that game have been heard all week. Collymore's accusations of racism being rebuffed by Liverpool players. Ah well, we may never

know the full story. You don't have to be a racist to dislike Collymore. The man damns himself by his own feet.

Villa, almost as much as Liverpool, are the great underachievers of the Premiership. When they won the Coca-Cola Cup two years ago they looked ready to challenge for the big titles but, for whatever reason, they have failed to improve. Indeed, they have regressed.

Why couldn't Currie, now departed, fit in? He has dazzling

feet. How could Little think that, by splashing out £7 million on Collymore, he was making a sound investment?

Chelsea are only slightly better. To win the FA Cup in a lean year, as they did, is a commendable achievement, but not a great one. Manchester United have put them firmly in their place this season with two victories at Stamford Bridge of contrasting nature and, in order to qualify for European competition again, Chelsea will probably have to win the Coca-Cola Cup or, indeed, the Cup Winners' Cup.

Given the state of the field they will fancy themselves to do just that. Don't expect a classic.

CHELSEA (probable 4-3-3): E. Seely — S. Clarke, F. Latchford, M. Duberry, G. Le Saux — P. Petersen, O. Wingo, R. Di Matteo — G. Zola, M. Hughes, T. A. P. P.
ASTON VILLA (probable 3-5-2): M. Bowish — U. Eborh, G. Southgate, R. Schmeichel — S. Gregor, I. Taylor, M. O'Connor, I. Hendrie, A. Wright — D. York, S. Collymore.
Referee: S. Lodge.

■ **TELEVISION:** Tomorrow: Match of the Day, brief highlights.
■ **PREDICTION:** 1-1.

FOOTBALL SATURDAY

Truth of Collymore fracas must be put in black and white

Well, it caused a storm, didn't it? Stan Collymore's return against Liverpool was always going to generate its fair share of controversy, but I don't think that anyone expected the outcome of last Saturday.

Racism is a serious issue and it is important for me to state that it is a detestable attitude that has no place in sport, or in society for that matter. Everyone at Liverpool shares that view, from the players to the staff.

We have gone to great lengths at Anfield to support the Kick Racism Out of Football campaign. We have done it with England as well, and there is no doubt that racism is not the problem within the game — certainly among the players — that it perhaps was a few years ago.

There is no room to be complacent, but if there is a problem, then

it is generally in cases where, in the heat of a game, players say indefensible things about race. Every footballer accepts that there will be barracking and name-calling and lots of banter throughout a match — but racist comments should never be part of that.

It is up to players to set an example if we are ever to rid our sport of this problem. What we should be aiming for is an atmosphere where every supporter feels that he or she can come to a match and support their team without feeling uncomfortable or abused in any way. The only way to start that is with the players.

Steve Harkness has said that he didn't make racist comments — Stan: I was the last person off the pitch at Villa Park on Saturday and I didn't see what happened in the tunnel. I have been told that

there was a bit of a shouting match and that Stan and Steve had a go at each other, trading insults.

They continued their verbal from off the pitch. It happens in every match: a defender marking an attacker will have a go at putting his opponent off, and vice versa. It is part of the game. But Steve said that he didn't make racist comments and the Liverpool players have accepted that there must have been a misunderstanding.

The only thing that puzzles us is how this could have got into the newspapers, when it was something that only two people know about and have different opinions about.

Our lads have been fine about it. Harkness has come in for a bit of leg-pulling and Phil Babb made the funniest comment when he brought Steve a white blanket with

McMANAMAN'S WORLD



holes cut out as eyes to put on his head.

That wasn't flippant, it was a message that the players accept the misunderstanding. Nobody at Liverpool would condone racist comments. I can honestly say that it would never cross my mind to make any comments like that to any player. I might call him fat, or useless or stupid, but never anything too offensive.

There is still a problem of racism in society and it is important for footballers to use their public image to get the message across that it is wrong. There are people

who hide among football supporters, using the game as an excuse to proclaim their terrible ideology, and professional footballers deplore that.

The Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) has been at the forefront of the campaign to kick racism out of football. All players support that stance. The PFA has an important role to play in promoting the message and I believe that it is doing an impressive and important job. As Liverpool, we have our own way of dealing with the racism issue. John Barnes used to be

subjected to some terrible stick from opposing supporters when he first started out at Anfield. There was that disgraceful picture of bananas being thrown at him. What sort of person could do a thing like that?

One year, at our Christmas party, everyone was enjoying themselves when someone walked in, dressed in full Ku Klux Klan regalia. The place went horribly quiet and everyone feared it would cause great offence. Then the person pulled off his mask — and it was Barnes.

Robbie's rotten luck

I was distraught when I heard the news about the extent of Robbie Fowler's injury. It is terrible for him, not least because it means that he will not be going to the World Cup this summer, and I know just how much that means to him.

He came to the team hotel before the Villa game at the weekend and I had to do everything for him, because he couldn't walk. I had to pick him up to help him into bed and even help him to get dressed.

Such a serious injury is a depressing thing for a footballer. It is the great unspeakable fear among footballers, the injury that could end your career. To be honest, it is something that I never think about. As a professional, you can

worry about an event that might end your career, or you can get on with it and just put it out of your mind altogether. I choose the latter course — because otherwise it could wreck your life!

I have had a serious injury. When I dislocated my knee, it has happened three times, but every time, I knew that I would be back quite quickly, with a bit of work. With Robbie, the problem is more severe. He has got the physical work, of course, to ensure that he gets back in top condition. But the problem is more of a mental one. When you are out of action for so long, it is the havoc that it can play with your mind that can be the genuinely destructive force.

You have to be so strong, mentally, to deal with the thoughts that go through your mind when you are inactive. The fears, the boredom, they all play a part in destroying confidence and planting seeds of doubt. I was in plaster up to my thigh and that was a terrible feeling, just because I was immobile.

Robbie is a strong character and he is working hard already to get back quickly. I know he will come back in good shape and I will be proud to see him back on the pitch, as a better, stronger player. We all wish him luck at Liverpool and pray for his speedy recovery.

STEVE McMANAMAN

GUIDE TO THE WEEKEND FIXTURES

FOOTBALL

Kick-off 3.00 unless stated
P denotes play-off match
D denotes derby
F denotes fixture

FA Cup
Sth round

(1) Coventry v Sheffield Utd
(2) Luton v Walsley

FA Carling Premiership
(1) Liverpool v Bolton
(2) Sheffield Wed v Manchester Utd
(3) Southampton v Everton

Man Utd P W D L F A Pts
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Blackburn 27 13 9 4 45 28 48

Chelsea 27 13 9 4 45 28 48
Derby 27 13 9 4 45 28 48

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Second division

(1) Blackpool v Watford
(2) Bristol Rovers v Northampton

(3) Chesterfield v Fulham
(4) Luton v Wycombe

(5) Millwall v Gillingham
(6) Plymouth v Preston

(7) Walsley v Burnley
(8) Wrexham v Carlisle

(9) York v Wigan
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Third division

(1) Brighton v Hartlepool
(2) Hull v Doncaster

(3) Leyton Orient v Lincoln
(4) Notts County v Barnet

(5) Peterborough v Grimsby
(6) Rochdale v Chester

(7) Torquay v Cambridge Utd
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Fourth division

(1) Aldershot v Dagenham
(2) Boreham Wood v Havant

(3) Chesham v Slough
(4) East Thurton v Maidstone

(5) Farnham v Farnham
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Club and country can be assured of my loyalty

LAWRENCE DALLAGLIO



Club versus country? There is no contest. I am captain of Wasps and have a contract with them that takes me to the end of next year. Within that contract Wasps fully support the principle of releasing me for England duty.

It is clear that Chris Wright (the club owner) and Wasps fully support England rugby. We have provided this year alone the England manager, Roger Uttley, the England A assistant coach, Rob Smith, Pat Fox, the fitness coach and Phil Keith-Roach, the scrumming coach. And I have had the honour of captaining the team. Therefore it continues to confuse me when I read about there being a huge and irreparable conflict between club and country.

It's not for me to discuss the contractual arrangements of England's leading players with their

respective clubs. My contract with Wasps allows me to make myself available for both England training and selection so a decision about whether I would play or not is one for Clive Woodward.

It is my intention to honour my contract with Wasps. I can categorically state that I have received no official inducement from the Rugby Football Union, or anyone involved in English rugby, to sign a contract with Twickenham.

I have never met a player who has had to be dragged kicking and screaming from his bed to represent his country. Playing for England is not compulsory, you are not duty bound to serve.

The last time England won a top trophy in a leading sport was in 1966, well before I was born. As a country we still talk about former glories. The reasons why, in rugby, New Zealand and South Africa are

England must fulfil their obligation to tour southern-hemisphere countries

consistently successful is not because they are lucky or things are left to chance. It's because the right environment and structure are in place.

The game is at the crossroads. What happens in the coming months is crucial. People have to decide whether they want England to continue to make up the numbers or whether they want the team to compete consistently and successfully against the dominant forces in world rugby.

The decision about whether other players tour is surely one for the England coach and that individual. If selected I would certainly make myself available. I am a man of

honour and I will honour what I have said I will do.

Last autumn no one from New Zealand complained about fatigue even though they had played 12 internationals in a year. They sent their best team so that our stadiums were filled. South Africa and Australia did the same. It would be disrespectful if we did not show them the same courtesy and pay them the same compliment.

I did not hear Clive Woodward deliver an ultimatum to the England players on Wednesday. If others felt that they had heard differently then perhaps they misunderstood what was being said. All Clive reiterated was that players had signed to make

themselves available for pre-Christmas internationals, the Five Nations and the summer tour. Now if some players find their club contracts don't allow them to tour then perhaps they should not have signed the England agreement. No one coerced them into doing so. If Clive felt he was picking players for the forthcoming game against Scotland who would not tour it would be a waste of his and England's time. That is not the way to develop a World Cup-winning side.

There has been speculation we may even have to field a below-strength side at Murrayfield. All I can say is that no one would wish to see that happen, least of all the players.

It does seem amazing that we can avert a Third World War with Iraq but cannot sort out rugby union. There is a lot of disinformation going on at the moment, a lot of

people with their own personal agendas. But I am a firm believer that there must be some common ground. If it is a question of personalities then they should move to one side for the good of the game. I cannot act as a broker but what I can say is there is no division among the players.

I appreciate that within the wider picture there will be no speedy resolution if the two sides are not even prepared to talk to each other. It is clear that the arguments that are raging in the game are not a debate about club v country but about something far more significant — who controls the players and ultimately the game.

I cannot predict what will happen but my hope is that we, the players, can compete in a dynamic and competitive club structure and that England can become the greatest side in the world. It can happen.

Five Nations Championship: Ireland, Scotland and Wales put tarnished reputations on the line

France prepare for grand parade

FROM DAVID HANDS
RUGBY CORRESPONDENT
IN PARIS

IRELAND, to their delight, brought the rain with them yesterday and turned springtime in Paris into a brisk, uncomfortable morning. But neither sun, wind nor rain will be powerful enough allies to prevent France from winning the penultimate stage of their assault on a back-to-back grand slam when they play the Irish at the Stade de France here this afternoon.

Even the French reputation for combustibility, which, over the past 12 years, has broken out at international level on comparatively few occasions, will not come to the aid of Ireland. If there is one message that has been drilled home to the French this year it has been that of collective discipline. That was the rock on which England stumbled a month ago.

The other message is that the players must finish what they have started. If France had taken every opportunity that their inventive play created against England, they would have at least doubled the two tries they scored. Perhaps at that stage it was merely a matter of confidence, it being their first outing since the 52-10 defeat by South Africa two months earlier. They have been told that it is imperative to maintain the shape of their game, to regroup swiftly and to reduce the number of turnovers. Against Scotland they lost the ball a dozen times in contact, even though they won the match 51-16.

"I have warned the players against losing their collective approach," Jean-Claude Skrela, the France coach, said. "There is no room in rugby for individualism. Anyone who thinks this is an occasion for self-indulgence will find himself watching the match from the stand." While understanding Skrela's rationale, it would be sad if the French *esprit de corps* ruled out the sense of style that, at its best, has so frequently characterised their rugby.

One needs the cheek of a Thomas Castaignède, the bustling exhortations of a Christian Calmano to add that indefinable splash of French colour to the Five Nations Championship, just as one needs the



New direction: Gatland, right, the Ireland coach, points the way forward during a training session in Orsay, south of Paris, yesterday

subtlety of a Welsh midfielder or the raw-boned athleticism of a Scottish back row to bring character to the tournament. So what can Ireland bring to a party at which they are always welcome but never able to get hold of the goodies on offer?

Their last victory in Paris was in

1972. Since Freddie McLennan, the Wanderers wing, scored a try in the 1980 fixture, the solitary Ireland try scored here was a penalty try in 1996. In the four games since 1990, France have averaged just less than 39 points a match, against 12 by Ireland.

Ireland can, of course, bring a new broom this time. Since they opened their campaign with the single-point defeat by Scotland, Brian Ashton has gone as coach and Warren Gatland arrived, bringing with him a down-to-earth realism born of his New Zealand roots. Ireland have been here before, of course, when another New Zealander — Murray Kidd — was the coach, but Gatland makes no bones about his ambition for this season. "We must regain respect from our opponents," he said. "That has not been the case for several seasons and, at the moment, it's difficult to look beyond that."

Given the margin of French victories this decade, respect will come from a performance that, as much as anything, restricts the home side but that must be more than the traditional blood-and-thunder for the opening quarter. Ireland must find a way of blunting the edge of the France half backs,



	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	2	2	0	0	75	33	4
England	2	1	0	1	77	50	2
Scotland	2	1	0	1	33	67	2
Ireland	1	0	0	1	18	17	0
Wales	1	0	0	1	28	80	0

RESULTS: Feb 7: France 24, England 17; Ireland 16, Scotland 17; Feb 21: England 60, Wales 25; Scotland 16, France 51.

FIXTURES TO COME: Today: Wales v Scotland; France v Ireland, March 21; Ireland v Wales, March 22; Scotland v England, April 4; England v Ireland, April 5; Wales v France.

Castaignède and Philippe Carboneau and that will be difficult if their pack is forced into reverse.

Gatland must draw on the club confidence of the Wallace brothers and Paddy Johns, from Saracens, and the familiarity of the Connacht half backs, Conor McGuinness and Eric Elwood. The latter's boot

may be Ireland's most potent weapon. But above all, within the short time at his disposal, he must have devised an attainable game-plan. There should be no high-flown talk about keeping up with the southern hemisphere when there are foes nearer home who must be overcome first.

The other instructive element today, in Paris and at Wembley, will be the displays of the referees. There were distinctly mixed feelings over the relaxed approach of the two New Zealanders, Colin Hawke and Paddy O'Brien, who handled the championship matches a fortnight ago at Twickenham and Murrayfield, ranging from the extreme praise of Clive Woodward, the England coach, to those who accused them of bringing Super 12 froth to the north.

O'Brien, one of the touch judges in Paris today, believes that there is a happy medium that both hemispheres still seek. Jim Fleming, Scotland's leading official, will bring a touch of rigour to the Stade de France, which should help Ireland if they rattle the bars of the French cage. But if the French runners, backs and forwards alike, break loose, then the blue wave will break over the green and wash it away.

Self-respect may emerge as main Wembley goal

BY GERALD DAVIES

THE results two weeks ago at Twickenham and Murrayfield have provided a strange and perhaps false perception of the games in the Five Nations Championship today. Certainly it is hard to imagine what to expect at Wembley Stadium.

There is a feeling abroad that whatever comes to pass between Wales and Scotland is irrelevant to the rugby-playing hierarchy and that the result should be regarded solely as being of academic interest. This may prove to be the case.

The remaining matches, therefore, cannot come round soon enough. This is not because of our undiminished appetite for international rugby, nor for the renewed excitement that visits to the various capital cities bring. Rather, it is because there is an urgent need to find the true validity of those extraordinary scores a fortnight ago and to put them in a more definitive context.

That England and France should score more than a half-century of points each against Wales and Scotland respectively still reverberates to the point of numbing disbelief for those who continue to suffer.

Did England and France, with the margin of their victories, make a decisive break from the rest? Were the scores an outline of what should be expected henceforth from two countries possessing broader bases of playing power and greater riches? Or were they an aberration in which the two referees, because of their southern-hemisphere habits of ignoring the letter of the law for the sake of entertainment, unwittingly collaborated in sporting slaughters that helped, in part, to diminish the championship?

Time will tell. Perhaps England and France did set the standard for the future. But for the record books to have any meaning, the game, as far as it is possible, needs to be consistent. The two referees today hail from the northern hemisphere

and their performances will be more keenly scrutinised than usual.

Such are the thoughts that dominate the mind above and beyond the debate about the form of the teams today. Overall, we are unlikely to be any wiser this evening. Scotland have had a despairing time of it. Their victory over Ireland in Dublin served as their only respite in between being grounded before Christmas by both Australia and South Africa and, a fortnight ago, by France.

Wales's preparation for the championship had a more kindly feel. Barring their defeat by New Zealand, they faced Romania, Tonga and Italy after their summer tour to the United States and Canada. There was progress of a kind but, after the England debacle, Wales must consider this match today to be yet another fresh start. The Scottish and Welsh seasons remain somewhat shapeless. For what it is worth, Wales beat Italy; Scotland lost to them.

Scotland at least have a semblance of continuity. They made only two changes after their last match and were forced because of injury to make another. Wales made nine changes in all and half of the pack has disappeared in the reshuffle.

If both countries are now cast as minnows, Scotland and Wales need to show that against each other they are capable of retaining a high level of skill. If the match is riddled with errors, the teams will only serve to confirm their lowered status. At all costs, they must not allow this to happen.

Both camps are spending time talking up the opposition in order that each can motivate the bunter of the underdog in themselves. If not that, then respect is the word dominating their vocabularies. After what both countries regard as a humiliating experience, they want to regain their own sense of self-worth. No one can argue.

TODAY'S TEAMS IN PARIS	
FRANCE	IRELAND
11. Saracens (London)	11. P O'Shea (London Irish)
12. Harlequins (London)	12. B Waller (Saracens)
13. Gloucester (Gloucester)	13. K Wiggs (Bristol)
14. Bath (Bath)	14. A J Henderson (Wales)
15. Exeter (Exeter)	15. D A Healy (St Mary's College)
16. Cardiff (Cardiff)	16. E P Maxwell (Cardiffians)
17. Newport (Newport)	17. G D McGuinness (St Mary's College)
18. London Welsh (London Welsh)	18. R Corrigan (Greyhounds)
19. London Irish (London Irish)	19. K M Wood (Harlequins)
20. London Welsh (London Welsh)	20. P S Wallace (Saracens)
21. London Welsh (London Welsh)	21. M E O'Kelly (London Irish)
22. London Welsh (London Welsh)	22. D S Corry (Bristol)
23. London Welsh (London Welsh)	23. A Ward (Ballynahinch)
24. London Welsh (London Welsh)	24. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)
25. London Welsh (London Welsh)	25. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)
26. London Welsh (London Welsh)	26. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)
27. London Welsh (London Welsh)	27. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)
28. London Welsh (London Welsh)	28. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)
29. London Welsh (London Welsh)	29. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)
30. London Welsh (London Welsh)	30. V C P Costello (St Mary's College)

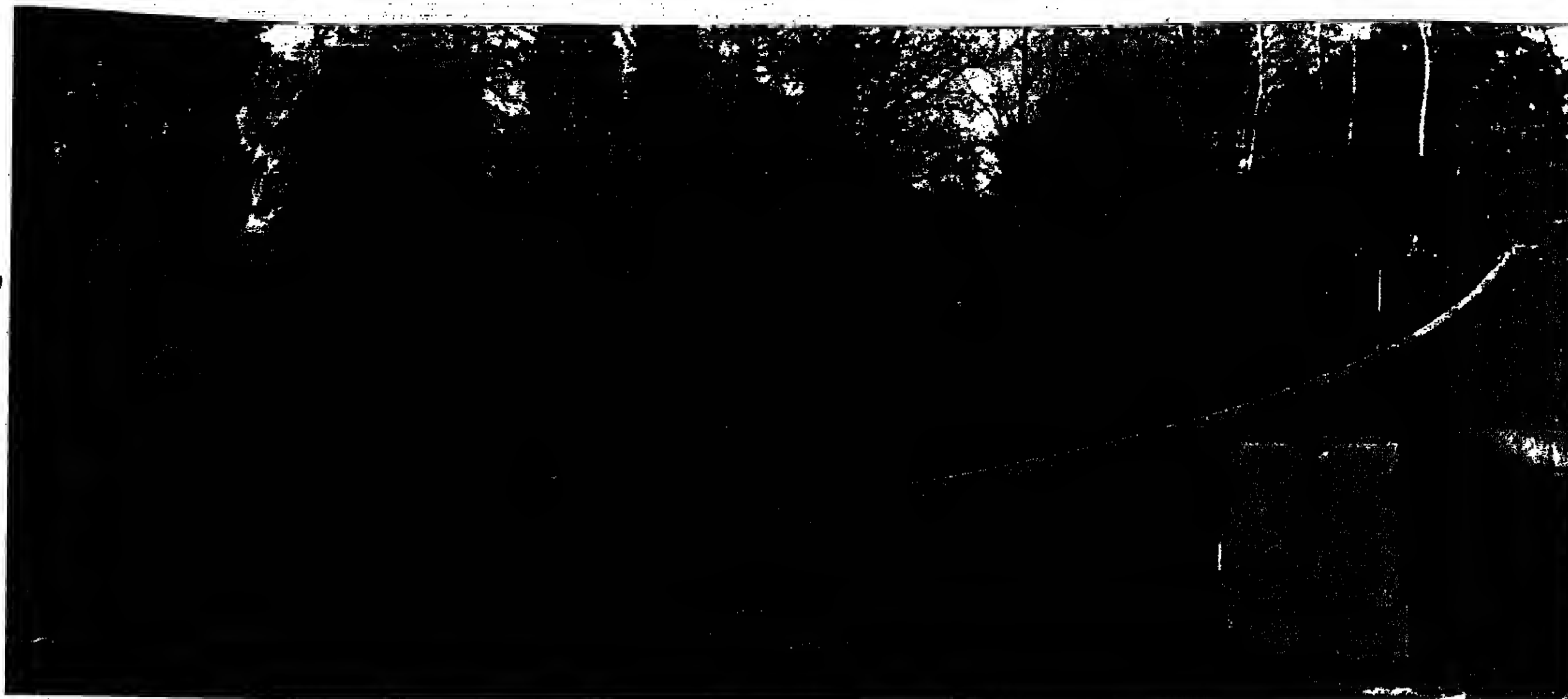
TODAY'S TEAMS AT WEMBLEY	
WALES	SCOTLAND
1. Morgan (Pontypridd)	1. Lee (London Scottish)
2. Proctor (Llanelli)	2. A Banger (Hawick)
3. Williams (Richmond)	3. P J Newman (Northampton)
4. Gibbs (Swansea)	4. A Vink (Newcastle)
5. Thomas (Bridgend)	5. Longstaff (Dundee HSFP)
6. Jenkins (Pontypridd)	6. C M Chalmers (Melrose)
7. Howley (Cardiff)	7. Armstrong (Newcastle)
8. Lewis (Cardiff)	8. D W Winton (Bath)
9. R Jenkins (Swansea)	9. G C Bullock (West of Scotland)
10. Young (Cardiff)	10. M J Stewart (Northampton)
11. J Voyle (Llanelli)	11. D F Cronin (Wesps)
12. P Moore (Swansea)	12. W Welf (Newcastle)
13. A P Jones (Swansea)	13. R J Wallwright (Dundee HSFP)
14. P Jones (Ebbw Vale)	14. J Rieck (Kelso)
15. C L Charles (Swansea)	15. E W Peters (Bath)
16. Captain	16. Captain
17. Captain	17. Captain
18. Captain	18. Captain
19. Captain	19. Captain
20. Captain	20. Captain

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'He can see the flaw in horse or rider and knows the exercise that will set it to rights'



Baisner, who says that he is still learning, uses a lunging rein as he embarks on a confidence-building programme with one of his charges at the Waterstock House training centre. Photograph: Hugh Routledge

Horse master with the magic touch

Yogi Baisner rejects talk of miracles. He puts his success at an equestrian centre in Oxfordshire down to common sense

But who, I asked, "is Yogi?" That was last week as Charlie Brooks watched the careful reconditioning of his faintly flawed wonder horse, Sunny Bay. "Yogi," he said, more or less tautologically, "is a guru."

"And don't," Yogi said, "call me a guru." That was last week and I had gone to visit the guru at his ashram. Or, at least, the equestrian centre at Waterstock, in Oxfordshire, where Yogi, more or less on a daily basis, works his...

"And don't talk about miracles, either. Everything I do is just a matter of common sense." Which is fair enough. And the more he talked, the more obvious it was. All right then: Yogi Baisner is simply a disseminator of common sense. And as Mark Twain remarked, the thing about common sense is that it ain't that common.

But we like the idea of gurus, of a person wiser than the rest of us, passing on his wisdom in a mysterious way. A guru: a man with a key in his hand, who painlessly opens the locked doors of our understanding.

Everywhere in life, when you move into the area of intangibles, you find gurus: in religion and philosophy of course. And golf, of course, more mysterious and fascinating, I'm assured, than religion, philosophy and the creative pro-

SIMON BARNES Talking horse

cess: brings us David Leadbetter. Leadbetter is a guru, and the guru of the game seeks his mountain top for spiritual refurbishment and a spot of advice on uncocking the wrists. Or, of course, cocking them. Baisner is like Leadbetter. He made the comparison himself. Both have a huge and extraordinary talent for the correction of flaws. Leadbetter does it with golfers. Baisner does it with horse riders—

jump jockeys, eventers, dressage. He also does it with horses. To Waterstock then, and a race-horse tall, lean and wonderfully athletic. You had to stride out to keep up with him at a walk. Talented, a good temperament, three chasing wins already in a fledgling career. And now problems.

I can't tell you his name, because I wasn't told it. Client confidentiality and all that. Walking his athletic way to an enclosed school. For many horse people, much of horse life happens in such a place. You rarely find such a thing in a racing yard. It's not How We Do It. Yet get a lot of that, in the horse world. That is not the way it has always been done, so it must be wrong. Much of the horse world exists in hermetic compartments: everyone except us is (a) cruel and (b) incompetent.

But here was a racehorse walking out on a long, lunging rein—had he ever done such a thing since he had first been ridden? And to be lunged over a jump, and not a National Hunt jump but a show jump. No rider on his back. The horse had to think for himself.

"The brain," Baisner said. "You have to work on his brain, if you want to get the body to work right." I can't remember if he was talking about riders or horses at this point. The principle is the same in either case. Communication, you see.

And Baisner was communicating with the unknown and flawed animal by means of the lunging-rein, gestures of the whip, nuances of body language, voice. Mostly those staccato clicks that have become, perhaps have always been, part of the way in which humans talk to horses. "He was talking, liberties with his fences," Baisner explained as the horse spun animatedly around him. "He was becoming too racy." His mind all on the other horses and the mad excitement of it all, crashing through the fences any old how, deaf to the corrections and the curses of his jockey. That way lies defeat, probably injury, possibly death.

How do you deal with a problem horse? You can cross your fingers and hope for the best. Many horse people, professional and amateur, do exactly that. Sometimes it even works. You can try and solve the problem yourself. You can bring in

a work jockey for a schooling session. Or you can send for Yogi. "Oh, I'm quite sure some trainers think I am a complete waste of time and money." Some people think that the horse whisperers—they hate the term even more than Baisner hates being called a guru—the Monty Roberts school are charlatans. Others, the Queen for example, swear by them. Baisner is rather a fan himself and incorporates the Roberts stuff into his own method.

Which is only really one common sense inside another common sense, with the Mark Twain rule remaining in force.

And the Unnamed One was now lunged into the small jump. A pause: you could almost read the words on the thought-bubble over the horse's head: "What? All by myself?" And, mastering himself and gathering himself, he jumped. And jumped and jumped again, and then did it all in the other direction.

"Confidence is everything in jumping." Every human rider knows that as well as every horse. "You build confidence with good experiences and knowledge."

And almost strutting under the influence of a good experience, almost visibly greater in knowledge, the horse was asked, by means of the shifting of a pole in front of the jump, to stand off the jump and seriously leap. And, being asked, seriously leapt.

Baisner was born in Sweden and remade in Ireland. He trained on to become a top-quality event rider. But his destiny was to become a trainer and to train the animals of two quite different species to combine their joys and their talents in the name of sport.

A few years ago, a combination of circumstances brought him

more and more racehorses. His talent is to combine the methods of different branches of the horsey world, as cross-training has become the vogue in human athletics. "And learning, always learning." Some racehorse trainers are terrible old stick-in-the-muds, others are always mad for innovation. It is a matter of temperament. And after all one of the most important rules of racing is that nobody ever laughs when your horse passes the post in front of all the others.

So send for Yogi. And what Baisner does is really all frightfully simple. He can see the flaw in horse or rider with great facility. He knows the exercise that will set the flaw to rights. And he knows how to communicate this to the human, to the horse. Gurus need confidence, too.

The odd thing about reading Mike Brearley's book about leadership in cricket, *The Art of Captaincy*, was that instead of exploring mysteries, it seemed to proclaim that Brearley's secret was that there is no secret.

It all seems very obvious, the way he tells it. One great Victorian scientist exclaimed on reading *The Origin of Species*: "How extremely stupid not to have thought of that." There are times when it is clear that common sense is a very rare talent and one that sometimes bears the hallmark of genius.



Baisner: works on the brain

THUNDERER
2.25 Sierra Creek, 2.55 Dantes Cavalier, 3.25 Polar Lord, 4.00 Sierra Bay, 4.30 Saxon Duke, 5.00 Mr Christie.

GOING: GOOD TO SOFT (7.15AM INSPECTION) SIS
2.25 COLESDEN SELLING HURDLE (E1,870; 2m 110yd) (15 runners)
1-444 POMME SECURE 11 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 ALPINE 22 (A. Dwyer) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
9-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
10-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
11-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
12-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
13-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
14-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
15-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

THUNDERER
2.05 Majestic Creek, 2.35 The Land Agent, 3.10 A N C Express, 3.45 Ertine, 4.15 Mon Amie, 4.45 Double Silks, 5.15 Gascie.
Carl Evans: 4.45 Double Silks.

GOING: SOFT (7.15AM INSPECTION) SIS
2.05 WATERGALL NOVICES HURDLE (E2,793; 2m 4f 110yd) (14 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
9-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
10-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
11-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
12-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
13-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
14-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

2.35 EXTERIOR PROFILES LTD NOVICES HURDLE CHASE (E7,263; 2m 4f 110yd) (7 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

3.10 CRUDDWELL CUP (Handicap chase; E3,930; 3m 5f) (8 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

2.55 WYBOSTON NOVICES CHASE (E3,134; 2m 4f 110yd) (5 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

4.15 BLACKDOWN HURDLE (E3,760; 2m 4f 110yd) (4 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

4.45 TOWN OF WARWICK FOXHUNTERS TROPHY (Hurdle chase; antedates; E1,000; 3m 2f) (6 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

5.15 EASTONE MARES ONLY INTERMEDIATE OPEN NATIONAL HUNT FLAT RACE (E1,497; 2m) (13 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
9-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
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11-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
12-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
13-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

7.00 BORIS POGOFF MAIDEN HANDICAP (E2,295; 7f) (12 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
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10-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
11-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
12-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

8.00 JACK KIRKLAND HANDICAP (E2,834; 1m 1f 79yd) (13 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
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12-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
13-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

3.25 TIM PRICE 10TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION NOVICES HURDLE (E2,400; 3m 2f) (5 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

4.00 LESLEY ANN WALKER BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION HANDICAP CHASE (E3,498; 2m 110yd) (6 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

THUNDERER
7.00 Pow Wow, 7.30 Pink Ticket, 8.00 Be Warned, 8.30 Teapoy Girl, 9.00 Chemcast, 9.30 Sorrier.

GOING: STANDARD DRAW: NO ADVANTAGE
7.00 BORIS POGOFF MAIDEN HANDICAP (E2,295; 7f) (12 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
9-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
10-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
11-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
12-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

7.30 NOLA BANQUO LIMITED STAKES (E3,400; 1m 100yd) (9 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
9-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

8.00 JACK KIRKLAND HANDICAP (E2,834; 1m 1f 79yd) (13 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
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6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
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12-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
13-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

4.30 CHAWSTON HANDICAP CHASE (E3,001; 3m) (8 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon

5.00 WILDEN HANDICAP HURDLE (E2,495; 3m 2f) (9 runners)
1-444 MAJESTIC CREEK 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
2-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
3-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
4-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
5-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
6-444 GENTLE TIDE 10 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
7-444 CHALAN LAR 27 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
8-444 BURNING BROWNS 22 (R.D.S.) M Pave 5-12-0 R. Haydon
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Reverse-cone exhaust echoes Fifties and Sixties Triumphs

Engine: in-line 12-valve, 885cc; triple, producing 82bhp at 8,500rpm.
Transmission: Six-speed gearbox. Chain final-drive.
Performance: Max speed: 130mph, 0-60mph in 3.5 seconds.
Price: £7,649 (plus £350 on-the-road charge)
Insurance group: 12 (with Norwich Union).

fooled by the new Triumph's name. Despite its tweaked engine and uprated chassis, the triple is definitely more Thunderbird than Sport, and it didn't get the adrenalin flowing quite as much as I'd expected. But as a retro-bike that can be ridden rapidly and in comfort, the Triumph is hard to beat.

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framlington

Patrick Collinson looks at the traps lying in wait in the small print

Stuck in a real fix

When Nigel Berney, a barrister and property consultant, came to the end of his two-year fixed-rate loan, he was shocked to learn that he would have to pay the Bradford & Bingley Building Society £5,500 to fix again.

Mr Berney was trapped in the web of redemption penalties that lenders use to lock customers into their mortgages. Even though a fixed-rate period may have ended, lenders can continue to charge a redemption penalty for years afterwards if the borrower wants to move mortgages or change terms.

Many borrowers are under the illusion that so long as they stay with their lender, they can switch without additional cost to a new fixed rate once their fixed period has expired.

However, the small print of fixed-rate mortgage contracts specifies that often run to nearly five years. So, a borrower who took out a two-year fix can find that even two years after the fixed period has expired, or more than four years into the life of the loan, he faces a penalty charge. The penalty varies markedly between lenders, with a worst-case scenario of nine months' interest, but is more usually three months' interest or 3 to 5 per cent of the outstanding mortgage balance.

Lenders rarely forbid a borrower from switching to a new fixed loan, but the potentially huge cost of an early redemption penalty can easily wipe out the gain of switching to a lower fixed rate.

Mr Berney remortgaged his home at Kings Langley, Hert-



Nigel Berney had a shock after his loan's fixed-rate period

fordshire, two years ago, switching his £130,000 loan to Bradford & Bingley. Last month, the fixed period ended and he asked his B&B adviser about moving to a new fixed rate rather than falling back to the society's current 8.45 per cent variable rate.

Mr Berney said: "At first, they were very helpful and said there would be no problem. But then he said, 'Hang on, there's a penalty of six months' interest, or about £5,500.' To make matters worse, it then became apparent that because Mr

on the society's standard variable rate.

Should Mr Berney have spotted the scale of penalties in the terms of the mortgage before he agreed to remortgage with the B&B? He said: "I'm sure it was in the small print somewhere, but I cannot recall being made aware of it."

Rex Kirk, of the B&B, said: "When we price a product we have to take into account the time a borrower will stay with us. If our mortgages did not have these early redemption penalties, we would have to push the rate up. We are very clear about putting information about penalties upfront and we do not hide them."

"When someone comes off a fixed rate, they also get a 0.25 per cent credit off our 8.45 per cent standard variable rate."

However, a split has arisen in the mortgage market on charging redemption penalties after a fix ends. Lenders such as Abbey National, Lloyds, C&G and Woolwich charge the penalties on short-term fixes for up to five years. However, Halifax, the Nationwide and Barclays offer homebuyers two options on fixed-rate loans. For example, under option one, Barclays is offering a two-year 7.79 per cent fix until May 31 2000, with no lock-in after that. At that date, a customer can switch to another fixed rate or even another lender without extra cost. Under option two, the bank offers a two-year rate of 6.89 per cent, but tells customers that the lock-in lasts four years, during which early redemption will cost up to 3 per cent of the remaining balance.

Pressure mounts for tougher

Pressure is mounting for tougher rules to govern the selling of home loans, in spite of the extension earlier this year of the mortgage code to intermediaries who arrange finance for home buyers. About half of the loans now sold are arranged by middlemen, such as mortgage brokers or financial advisers. But there are concerns that they may not always fully reveal the penalties payable when fixed and discounted rate loans are redeemed early.

The Office of Fair Trading and the Consumers' Association believe that the

mortgage code does not afford sufficient protection to borrowers and that the complexity of mortgages means they should be covered by the regulatory regime that covers savings and investments.

These bodies argue that borrowers are not always told of the hazards of redeeming their fixed-interest loans early, nor are they told of the fees that intermediaries can earn from placing the mortgage with a particular lender. "Procurement fees" have become more and more commonplace, and vary from £250 to 1

per cent of the mortgage. On a big loan these fees could run into hundreds, perhaps even thousands of pounds.

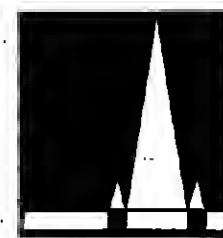
When selling life insurance, pensions and investments, middlemen must inform the client whether they are authorised to offer the products of more than one company and disclose their commission. They must also make clients aware of the financial penalties associated with cashing in the products early. The mortgage code requires a much lower level of disclosure from intermediaries.

Helen Liddell, Economic Secretary to

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while Gavin Lumsden has a warning about checking interest rates

Beware rule 78



Rules are rules and even the dreaded rule 78 must be obeyed

If you are thinking of borrowing money, you will probably check the interest rates on offer from lenders. However, although comparing lenders' APRs (annual percentage rates) is sensible, it does not tell the whole story. It can be just as important to find out how much it will cost if you pay off the loan early.

You could be shocked by the answer as nearly all finance houses and high street personal lenders still use a method of calculating early redemption penalties that the Office of Fair Trading has banned from use for mortgages.

Lenders that use the "rule 78" method can force borrowers who want to redeem their loan early to pay nearly all the interest they would have paid had they paid the loan to the end of its term. Rule 78 has become notorious in the mortgage market where it can produce staggeringly high redemption figures well in excess of the original amount borrowed. Lenders were able to exploit the rule to lock borrowers into expensive loans until last year when the OFT banned its use.

Unfortunately, the OFT's move applies only to loans over £15,000 which are unregulated and not covered by the Consumer Credit Act. As rule 78 is part of the CCA regulations, most lenders can legitimately use it, even though it is designed to set the maximum level they can levy. This can have devastating consequences for borrowers. One couple contacted *The Times* in desperation. They borrowed more than £9,000 seven years ago, have paid £20,000 to their lender and still owe £20,500, all because rule 78 is being applied.

The OFT is unhappy that borrowers of so-called regulated loans now get less protection from lenders charging huge

redemption penalties than if they had taken an unregulated loan. The watchdog is in urgent talks with the Department of Trade and Industry and lenders about changing the law. It is particularly concerned because in May the threshold for regulated loans rises to £25,000, bringing far more borrowers under rule 78.

Until the law is changed borrowers need to be on their guard as most lenders do not advertise their use of rule 78.

Many lenders give the misleading impression that they simply charge one or two months' interest for early redemptions. This is not true.

Under the Consumer Credit

Rebate in the Early Settlement Act 1983 lenders may defer calculating the redemption figure for one or two months depending on whether the term of the loan is more or less than five years. For example, if in the 15th month of a four-year loan you tell your lender that you want to pay the loan off, the company could wait until month 17 before giving you a settlement figure. You could have to pay interest for two more months before the lender tells you how much more you owe.

This is not the same as simply making two more payments on the loan and then paying off the capital you owe.

although lenders would like you to think so.

This commonsense "balance and interest" approach always produces lower settlement figures than rule 78 plus one to two months. Take, say, a borrower with a £12,000 ten-year loan at 12 per cent APR. If after three years he wanted to redeem the loan, he would have to pay £9,784 using the balance and interest system. However, deferring rule 78 for one month produces a figure of £10,192 — £408 more.

The disparity gets worse the longer the loan and the higher the interest. A borrower redeeming a £15,000, 25-year loan charging 12 per cent APR after ten years would pay £13,149 under balance and interest but £16,385 under rule 78 — a difference of £3,236.

Lenders rightly claim that most of their personal loans are shorter and smaller. Even here, though, the borrower always loses out. A £4,000 five-year loan charging 18 per cent APR would cost £2,928 to redeem under rule 78, £69 more than it should.

So what should borrowers do? If you want to settle your loan early, be aware of lenders using rule 78, particularly if you are planning to borrow a large amount of money for five years or more.

Lenders in this camp include AA Financial Services, Abbey National, Alliance & Leicester, First Trust Bank, Lombard Direct, Midland, Royal Bank of Scotland and TSB.

The Co-operative Bank, Yorkshire Bank, Barclays and Lloyds are among the few lenders that do not impose early redemption penalties.

rules on home loan sales

the Treasury has warned lenders that if the mortgage code does not work properly, then she will bring loans under the same regime as insurance, investments and pensions. Lenders are anxious to avoid statutory regulation as it will substantially increase their compliance costs.

The intermediary code, which is voluntary, is identical to the code that is already in place for the lenders. But as nearly half of all mortgage business is introduced by financial advisers to lenders, the Council of Mortgage Lenders and the Government felt it was appropriate that intermediaries should also sign up.

Those in the multi-billion pound mortgage market, banks, building societies and life insurance companies, are keen to prove that the code is adequate to

protect consumers against mis-selling of home loans. Last year, the Building Societies Ombudsman received more than 5,000 complaints about mortgages — a third of all those received.

Mortgage brokers that sign up to the code will have to pay a fee to be on a central register of intermediaries. After the end of April, consumers will be able to telephone the register to discover whether the mortgage broker they are dealing with has signed up to the code.

The code stipulates that mortgage brokers must state whether they are linked to just one lender or whether they can offer the products from many different lenders. They must disclose the fees they are earning from the sale of the mortgage, they must also

detail the penalties that occur if the loan is a fixed or capped rate and it is redeemed early.

They must also give an idea of the level of repayments that could occur, when the fixed rate ends and the borrower moves on to a variable rate.

The Mortgage Code Register of Intermediaries (MCR), which is setting up the broker register, refused to reveal how many had signed up to the code. The MCR is also yet to come up with a scheme to ensure that mortgage brokers comply.

Colin Harris, the chairman, said: "The council is going to introduce compliance procedures to make sure brokers comply."

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Perpetual	4th	4th	2nd	3rd	2nd
Mercury Fund Mngrs	5th	6th	5th	5th	6th
Fidelity Investments	6th	5th	4th	4th	1st
Schroder UT Ltd	7th	7th	7th	7th	7th

*Source: Investment Intelligence, 1998. Offer to offer basis. Largest 7 Unit Trust Management Groups' relative weighted performance. Sorted by 1 year performance.

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Eternal truths just do not last



GRAHAM SEARJEANT

Dictators are not the only ones who rewrite history. From family affairs to corporate conflict and the sweep of economies and markets, past events are constantly being censored, edited and re-stated to suit prevailing opinion or interests. Even memory is vulnerable to this process. Busy folk are prisoners of the accepted view unless they have records with which to challenge the PR paint-roller that spreads it.

Nowhere is this truer than in the financial markets. Even today, it is often assumed that the Wall Street crash of 1929 or even the mini-crash of 1987 came out of the blue. They didn't. A glance at what was said at the time shows that stock markets shrugged off worsening economic trends. Adjustment was then harsh once pre-tense could no longer be sustained.

The most convenient truth in investment is that shares will always be a good bet in the medium term, so do not worry about short-term fluctuations. This has proved sound advice and still is. But it is not strictly true.

Look at those inconvenient records. Suppose that you had been able to buy an index-tracking UK unit trust in 1972. You would have stood no chance of getting your money back before the autumn of 1977, even

ignoring the charges. Most of the time, you would have nursed horrendous losses. After a full ten years, you might have made a capital profit of 30 per cent. Over that decade the retail prices index more than trebled. So much for shares being a great hedge against inflation. Good yes, great no. Inflation is not the problem in Japan, where the Nikkei 225 share index stands about 55 per cent lower than at the end of the previous decade. That was a speculative peak. The Nikkei plunged by nearly 60 per cent in a couple of years and has wandered aimlessly ever since.

Experts differ about whether Tokyo has been a bear market all eight years. For investors, it scarcely matters. You did not have to buy at the top to come a cropper. If you bought the index at any time in 1987, more than a

decade ago, you would still show a heavy loss, even bigger for the millions who bought in 1988 or 1989.

Few claim to have foreseen this disaster. A glance at some contemporary records, in this case the thoughts of Japan analysts at Kleinwort Benson, is still instructive. As early as March 1989, the economist Richard Jerram wrote: "Evidence is pointing to a peak in the economic cycle." In June 1989, the firm's analysts called "the end of the liquidity driven market" telling buyers to be choosy.

By August, KB headlined: "Low real interest rates and tight economy makes continued underperformance likely." Up to 15 per cent should be held in cash "although we believe the short-term momentum is upwards". It was. If investors had followed advice to sell out in March or June

they would have saved a fortune in the long run, but missed out on a final 20 per cent rise in share prices.

This euphoric bubble affected even the analysts' signs such as a surge from investment trusts into money funds. They reckoned profits would slow and that the market was discounting good news, but were less cautious than before. After Nemesis struck, the analysts tended to revert to eternal truths. Things should be OK in the medium term (they haven't) and Japanese shares and bonds move in the same direction (they haven't).

The analysts emerge with credit, but never said sell, sell, sell. You cannot stray too far from the consensus if you want to keep your credibility. Raging bulls or ferocious bears may prove right eventually, but if their timing is way out, as it usually is, few will be listening by the time they should. Trends overrun and the prevailing consensus is often stronger when about to be smashed.

If the logic of the facts conflicts with market sentiment, or with prevailing political wisdom, back logic, even if you look stupid in the short run. Fortunately, today's raging boom has plenty of sceptics. They are the best protection against disaster.

Revenue fines furore hots up

Accountants demand inquiry, says Susan Emmett

The row between accountants and the Inland Revenue over self-assessment, first highlighted by *The Times*, intensified this week as it emerged that significant numbers of penalty notices are being sent to taxpayers who had filed their returns on time. The blunders have brought calls for an investigation of the way in which the Revenue processes tax forms.

Last week the Revenue post-

ed 670,000 penalty notices for the £100 fines for those who failed to return forms by the final self-assessment deadline of January 31. But accountants are angry that the Revenue is demanding fines from clients who met the deadline.

Some have also claimed that clients who did not return their forms by the due date are

not receiving penalty notices. Both large and small firms have come under fire from disgruntled clients who have received fines, and accountants fear that their clients' confidence is being undermined by Revenue mistakes.

It is still too early to say how many taxpayers received penalty notices in error, although some accountants estimate that about 20 per cent of their clients were sent a fine notice despite filing on time. However, one small accountant in Sidcup said that about 75 per cent of his clients were sent penalty notices in error.

Peter Back, director of SimpleTax, a subsidiary of the accountants Horwath Clark Whitehill, which specialises in tax returns, said that 20 per

cent of his clients received penalty notices in error, while up to 15 per cent of clients who did not file have yet to be fined.

Mr Back said: "It's clear that a number of those penalty notices should not have gone out. After each major stage of the self-assessment process there have been failings. All indicates that there is something fundamentally wrong with the system."

"I think that some real questions have got to be asked. There is a case for some sort of inquiry. The Revenue expects taxpayers to meet their obligations in full but the Revenue is not meeting its obligations."

The problem mostly affects accountants who either posted or filed their clients' forms by

hand. Those who filed electronically have emerged unscathed.

Paul Harmsworth, managing director of Tax Link, the self-assessment tax calculation specialists based in Exeter, said that none of his clients whose returns were filed electronically received penalty notices, but fines were sent to 25 per cent of clients whose returns were filed on paper because of previous software problems with the Revenue's computer.

A spokesman for the Inland Revenue said: "I am aware of it happening, but I don't get the impression that it is a major phenomenon. Our apologies go to those who did receive a penalty notice but handed in the form on time. There was a big rush towards January 31, and there were instances of human error, but not on a mass scale."



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Peps - pros and cons

This week's issue of *Investors Chronicle* includes a detailed survey of Peps. An essential guide, it will help you understand the ins and outs of Peps - which are more involved than they appear.

We look at the complete range of Peps available. Do popular brand Peps live up to their reputations? Find out with our expert of the big names' approach to investment and comprehensive performance tables.

You'll discover why Peps should be part of a balanced portfolio. Is their bias to UK investment good for returns? And what are the issues surrounding the Individual Savings Scheme? For the mature investor we compare Peps to pensions and look at Peps specifically for the elderly.

Investors Chronicle, complete with a 50-page Peps Survey, is on sale on 6th March from your newsagent. Price £2.50.



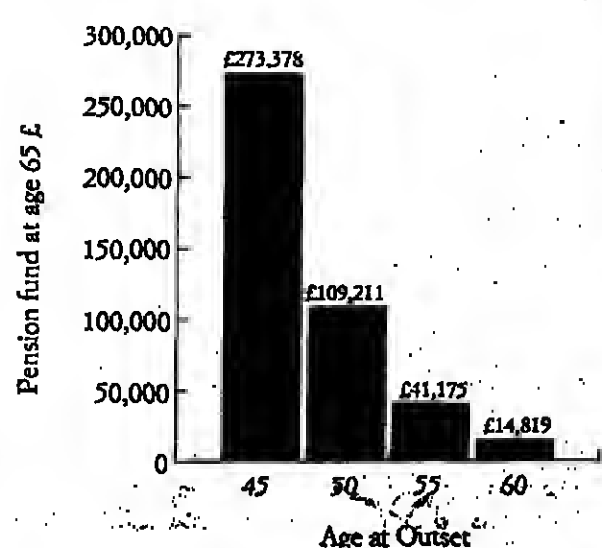
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TAKE FIVE MINUTES AND YOU COULD DOUBLE YOUR PENSION

A typical Equitable pension fund has doubled in value every five years, so the sooner you start saving the better off you will be when you retire. Put it another way. If you delay for five years, your retirement income could be halved. So five minutes spent reading on could well be worth your while.

In the chart below, we show the huge difference in the value of a £200 per month personal pension plan on your 65th birthday, depending on the age at which you start contributing.



This shows the actual open market option funds for a £200 per month Equitable Life with-profits personal pension plan as at 1 July 1997, pension benefits taken at exact age 65. Source: Money Management, October 1997.

Of course, the final value of the investment is not guaranteed.

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Three good reasons why we are renowned for our low costs.

It's also why an annual Planned Savings survey in October 1997 once again shows The Equitable Life as having the lowest ratio of expenses to premium income of all companies surveyed across the UK.

What is important is that we pass these savings on to our clients in the form of unusually low charges, so more of your money can be invested for the future.

IN A CLASS OF OUR OWN

A simple rating system, suggested in an Office of Fair Trading discussion document, allows people to make a straight comparison between pension products by giving each one a series of ratings, on a scale of A+ to C-, both for past performance and charges. A recent survey using this rating method showed The Equitable to be well ahead of the field.

PERSONAL PENSIONS RATINGS		
Company	Past Performance (Age next birthday - 50)	Own charge projections (Age next birthday - 30)
The Equitable Life	A+AB	A+A+A+
AXA Equity & Law	CCA	BBC
Britannia Life	***	CBB
CIS	BA*	CBA+
Clerical Medical	BAB	BAA
Commercial Union	*CC	ABA
Eagle Star	BAA	CBA
Ecclesiastical	***	***
Friends Provident	BBB	BC-A
General Accident	A*A	BAB
Legal & General	CBB	AAB
London Life	**C-	***
MGM Assurance	A+A+C	BBC-
National Mutual	BBB	BBB
Norwich Union	BBA	BAA
NPI	BBC-	BAB
Prudential	***	A+AC
RNPFN	ABA+	CC-A+
Royal London	BAA	BBC
Royal Sun Alliance	CC-C-	ABC
Scottish Amicable	BCB	BBC
Scottish Equitable	BCB	CBA
Scottish Friendly	BBB	C-CC-
Scottish Life	BBB	CBB
Scottish Mutual	BBA	ABC
Scottish Provident	*AC	***
Scottish Widows	BCB	ABB
Standard Life	BBC	ABC
Sun Life	CBB	BBB
Swiss Life	CC*	***
Wesleyan Assurance	*AA	BBC

* Denotes where no rating has been given due to company not having provided a figure.

Past performance - the three ratings refer to transfer value after 5 years, transfer value after 10 years and retirement fund (incl terminal bonus) respectively. All figures are calculated as at 1.4.97, assuming policies taken out six months before next birthday. Monthly premium £30. Retirement age 65.

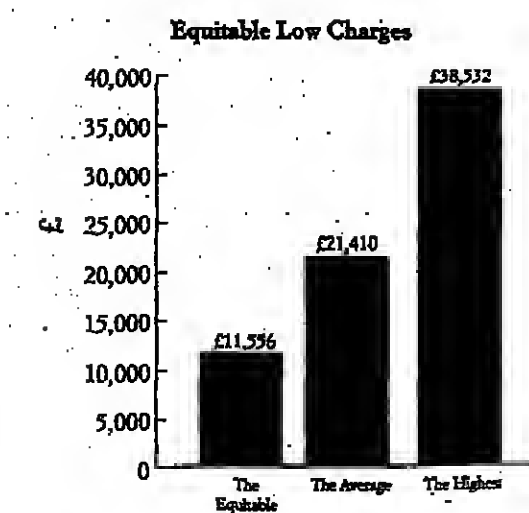
Own charge projections - the three ratings refer to transfer value at end of year 5, transfer value at end of year 20 and retirement fund respectively. Projections are based on plans commencing 1.4.97 and are in accordance with the PIA's projection rules, using the mid-point assumptions. Investment growth rate before charges 9% pa. RPI and AEI inflation rates are 4.5 and 6% pa respectively. Retirement age 65. Monthly premium £100.

Source: Money Marketing FPR With-Profits Survey, May 1997.

OUR LOW CHARGES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The chart below shows the effect that different companies' charges will have on a £200 a month with-profits pension plan over 20 years.

HOW MUCH A PENSION IS REDUCED BY CHARGES OVER 20 YEARS



These figures relate to projected open market option funds as at 1 July 1997 for new style with-profits personal pension plans for a man aged 45 due to retire at age 65. Monthly contributions £200. Assumed annual growth rate 9%. Source: Money Management, October 1997.

Because we charge barely half the industry average, the value of your fund could be increased by thousands of pounds.

THE MOST CONSISTENT INVESTMENT RECORD

When choosing your pension provider, surely it makes sense to look for a consistently strong performer. After all, almost every company has some sort of success story to tell - perhaps one of their funds went through a brief purple patch at some stage. But how often have they been able to repeat it?

Annual surveys by Planned Savings magazine put the whole subject of long-term investment into perspective. Since the first survey in 1974, The Equitable Life's with-profits pensions have had 45 top ten placings out of a possible 56. Our nearest challenger has managed just 31.

Remember though, past performance is no guarantee of future performance.

Contributions to the Society's pension

products are invested in its pension business fund. Since July 1997, pension funds can no longer recover tax credits on the dividends from UK equities but they continue to enjoy freedom from tax on capital gains and other income.

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Not everyone is in a position to contribute a regular amount. And many can't be sure when they will retire, so they want to be able to change their retirement date if necessary - without penalty.

No problem.

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IN SHORT

When it comes to pension planning you can't start too soon. The longer you leave it, the worse off you will be when you retire. But although time is of the essence, it is not the whole story. So choose your pension provider very carefully.

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FIDELITY MONEYBUILDER GROWTH	0%	0%	1%	+53.5%	+82.9%
VIRGIN GROWTH	0%	0%	1%	+48.8%	N/A
L&S UK INDEX	0%	0%	0.50%	+46.2%	+88.5%
FT-SE ALL-SHARE INDEX	N/A	N/A	N/A	+48.8%	+88.4%

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The last two years have seen highs on the stockmarket and gains for tracker-funds. But it's been even better for Fidelity's MoneyBuilder Growth PEP.

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Internet paves the way for cyber investor

Susan Emmett on financial tools available on a screen near you

So you want to be a cyber investor but fear getting lost on the information superhighway? Millions of households are online and many users are launching into cyberspace in search of financial information.

There are many Websites offering financial data, share prices and business news, and most high street financial service providers now have Websites. Often they amount to little more than advertising or an electronic brochure giving details of various financial products. However, the Nationwide and TSB offer online banking and Lloyds and Barclays will follow soon.

The greatest revolution in cyberspace has been the increase in independent sites offering financial information and share prices. Since the London Stock Exchange relaxed its rules last summer, the number of sites offering share price information has mushroomed. Many provide the service free with a 20-minute delay. Up-to-the-minute prices require a subscription.

Some sophisticated sites offer portfolio management facilities and links to execution-only stockbrokers, putting armchair investors in the driving seat. If it is your first surf, do not expect all to be perfect at first.

One wrong turn, and you will not find facts on Peps but will end up downloading reams of irrelevant data. Follow the right signs, and you will have much of the information available to City experts at your fingertips.

Q What are the tools of the trade?

A As financial Websites are using more and more technological wizardry, it pays to get relatively up-to-date kit. You will need a PC, a modem and an account with an Internet Service Provider (ISP), which provides the link between you and the World Wide Web. If you opt for an outdated system with a slow modem you will be stuck in frustrating traffic jams rather than cruising the information superhighway.

Q So, will it all cost me a fortune?

A Experts say that Internet access will be revolutionised by set-top boxes that will let you surf the Net via your television set. The contraptions are expected to cost about £200 and as a result, one in four homes is predicted to be online by 2000. The boxes are yet to appear in shops and the few available are slow and cumbersome.

For now, expect to spend about £800 on a PC and £50 on a decent modem, although they can be cheaper. The fastest modems can be as much as £90.

A multitude of ISPs are competing to take you into cyberspace. America Online (AOL) is the biggest closely followed by CompuServe. There are many smaller ones and the Nationwide will become the first financial services organisation to provide a link this summer. An ISP account can cost anything from £5 to £15 a month, depending on usage. Unlimited access is dearer. The good news is that the account is linked to you, not the machine, so you can use it on more than one PC.

Q Is it worth it? What can I get from the Net that I

cannot find elsewhere?
A A lot of the financial information on the Internet can be found in the financial press and in libraries more cheaply and sometimes more easily.

Q So, where is the best place to start?

A A financial directory will get you on the road. One starting point is the Financial Information Net Directory (Find), at www.find.co.uk. It follows the Yellow Pages format and financial sites in the UK are grouped under headings such as Peps. Alternatively, sites such as Yahoo! at <http://finance.yahoo.co.uk> offer 20-minute delay-free share price information, which is useful for quick reference. Up to the minute share information is available for a fee on sites such as Interactive Investor International www.ii.co.uk, Electronic Share Information www.esi.co.uk, Infotrade on www.infotrade.co.uk and Datastream Market-Eye Premium on www.market-eye.co.uk.

Q Is it possible to trade shares online?

A Cyber investors are on the verge of being able to trade completely electronically, without human intervention, a process that is current practice in America. At the moment, a few financial Websites offer "gateways" or "trading floors" to brokers. These include Infotrade and ESI, which provide links to brokers such as Charles Schwab, Caterdeal and Stocktrade, and more recently Datastream/ICV, where links to smaller brokers can be found on the Market-Eye site on www.market-eye.co.uk.

Q What about Peps and collective funds?

A Charles Schwab, the investment retailer, says that in America 50 per cent of its transactions are done electronically. In Britain, Inland Revenue rules require that PEP applications must have a real signature on a piece of paper. However, investors buying Peps or unit trusts from Fidelity Investments can top them up on the Internet by Switch or Delta card on www.webxpress.fidelity.co.uk. First-time PEP investors can shop around sites such as Interactive Investors International and Moneyworld, which offer information and data and provide a gateway to individual product providers.

Q Can I use the Internet to keep track of my investments abroad?

A If you invest in the American markets, you are well served by the Internet. A number of sites offer information on American companies. Yahoo! has links to the United States financial site (<http://quote.yahoo.com>) with 15-minute delayed feeds on all trading stocks on the New York and Nasdaq exchanges. If you want to keep track on investments further afield, Market Eye will come in handy. The site lists 32,000 international share prices in up to 60 countries, including all the markets in the European Union, New York, Tokyo, Sydney, Singapore, Hong Kong and São Paulo are among those covered.

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COST CONTROL
This is the most effective way to short-term higher profitability. Because of this it is

useful to get into the habit of calculating the extra sales you need to pay for an increase in costs. For example, you decide to advertise in a local newspaper at a cost of £200 a week, and because you make £20 clear profit on each sale, you know that to justify the extra expense you have to sell ten more items a week.

Once you are in this mode you will quickly equate a reduction in costs to extra profitability, a good discipline for any businessman. The best way to keep close tabs on your costs is to run a tight cash-control system and regularly review your business expenses.

Many people believe costs vary only very occasionally but this is not necessarily true and what cost £100 to buy in last month might be available now for £95, so keep a comprehensive list of all your suppliers' charges and review it at least once a month.

Pay close attention to core costs and although things like business rates are non-negotiable, other overheads like rent, telephone bills, insurance premiums, stationery expenses and travel costs can often be cut by looking for alternative suppliers or taking advantage of special offers.

In business, most things are negotiable and it is worthwhile trying to renegotiate costs with your suppliers as often as you think you can.

You should also look at the whole of your business to see where else you might be able to cut your costs. Consider your stock levels and ask if it would be possible to reduce

them because cash tied up in items waiting to be used could be put to better use.

You should also question customers who are paying late since this affects your cash flow, and although it somewhat contradicts this rule, paying your suppliers too early must be avoided.

One of the secrets of increasing your profits is to keep the same number of staff while achieving higher sales, so look at each person's role within the business and see if it is possible reasonably to increase their productivity.

RAISING PRICES
There is no automatic link between prices and costs, which means that you do not need to justify price rises by citing cost increases.

Small price rises of about 5 per cent can often result in a sizeable jump in profits because, although raising the unit cost of what you are selling

from £5 to £5.25 might not seem very lucrative, because the extra 25p per item is all pure profit, the opposite is often true. If you are operating in a very price-sensitive market, raising prices to increase profits will be hard and you might need to look at other methods of increasing how much your business makes.

Try to avoid giving discounts and if you are offering money off for bulk sales, stick to the quantity set before reducing your unit price. Whatever happens, most businesses are justified in raising prices in line with inflation and now this is almost expected.

SELLING MORE
While it is almost impossible to double prices or halve costs, it might be viable over time to double the amount you sell. Do not try to raise sales by cutting prices because this will achieve little except a price war with competitors and pressure on profit margins.

There are four main ways to sell more — improve your company's image, advertise, improve the skills of the people who sell your goods or services or seek new markets or products. All of these tactics come at a cost and you need to weigh this up against potential longer-term benefits to your business. However, remember that increased sales usually means more working capital and can have a negative impact on your cashflow, so make sure you have the funds before going ahead.

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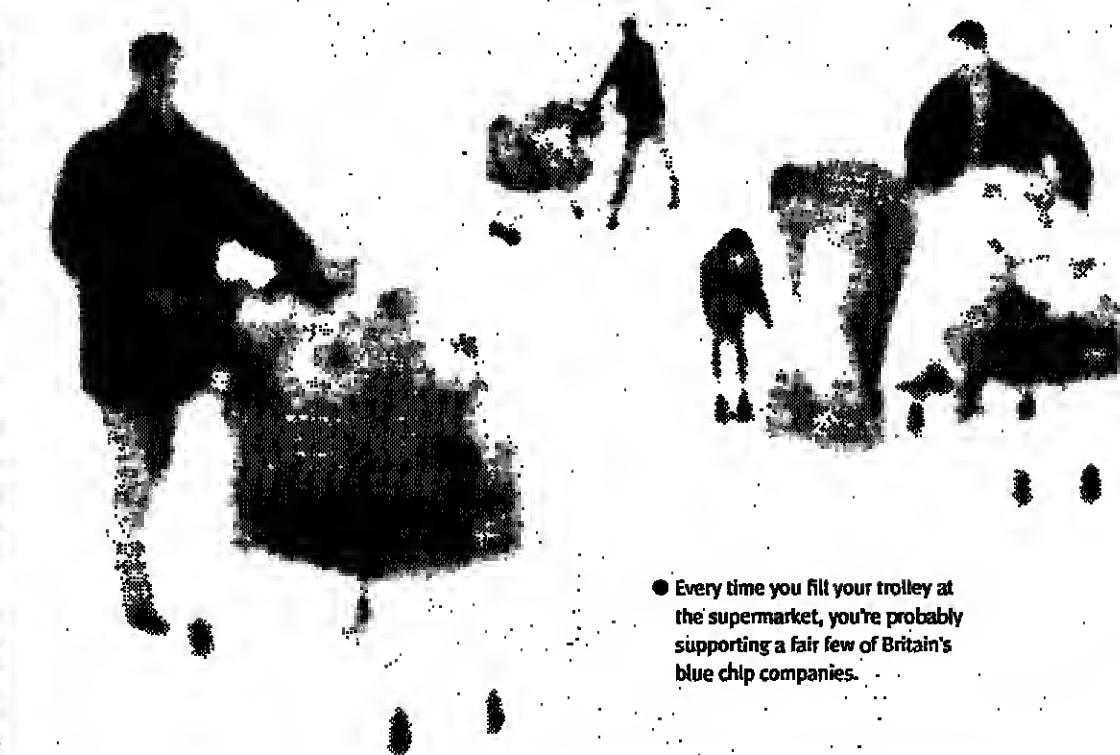
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SCOTTISH WIDOWS

Birthday celebrations fall flat for patient saver

Failure to keep track of long-term investment plans can prove very expensive, says Patrick Collinson

Every month for the past ten years Pradeep Agrawala paid £30 into an investment policy for his daughter, designed to pay out a lump sum on her 17th birthday.

But his daughter Sonya's birthday celebrations fell flat when Mr Agrawala saw what the insurance company, Aegon Financial Services, had done with his money. Mr Agrawala had paid in a total of £3,600 over ten years, but one month ago Sonya got back just £3,583.51, or a loss of £17.49.

Meanwhile, other investments over the same period had raced ahead. The FTSE 100 index jumped from a post-crash low of below 1,700 points in early 1988 to more than 5,600 by the beginning of last month - a gain of more than 300 per cent. If Mr Agrawala had put the money into Personal's UK Growth unit trust it would have grown to £8,625. Even if he had put the money into a Halifax account it would have grown to £4,430.59 and received a free shares bonus worth more than £2,000 today.

Mr Agrawala, a planning



Pradeep and Sonya Agrawala are still smiling in spite of the £3,583.51 return from a total investment of £3,600

engineer from Wembley Park in North London, said: "I find it impossible to understand how a big company can continue to run a fund like this, which is purely savings related and does not even return the contribution over a long period of ten years. I was

under the impression that if you put money into regular savings month after month then after ten years you could expect a reasonable return. I find the whole thing totally incomprehensible."

Mr Agrawala was the victim of life assurance sales methods common at the time he signed up to the policy, just months before the introduction of the Financial Services Act. He was contacted in 1988 by a saleswoman for Regency Life, which was bought by Aegon in 1991.

He says the saleswoman at the time - "a girlfriend of a friend of a friend" - told him that property was the best investment for his daughter's nest egg. She advised him to put all the money into the Property Series II fund, which was invested in commercial property such as offices and shopping centres, even though Regency offered a range of unit-linked funds with much safer risk profiles.

"She told me that property would be a very safe bet - you have to remember this was the late 1980s - but I didn't know it was all going into commercial property," said Mr Agrawala.

One respected independent financial adviser, Roddy Kohn of Bristol-based Kohn Cougar, says that no one should be advised to put all of a regular savings plan into a single, high-risk area such as commercial property. He said: "Investors with small amounts should consider a unit trust savings plan with the money going into a general managed

or broadly spread international equity fund."

Regency also levied high charges on Mr Agrawala's £30 a month Universal Savings Plan, pocketing his first nine months' contributions in charges and extracting another £1 a month as a policy fee. Furthermore, Regency proved to be a poor manager of property investments, with its performance lagging most of its competitors.

Mr Agrawala is angry that Regency and then Aegon failed to take remedial action to improve the fund's performance or to keep him notified of how badly it was doing. An investor can expect to receive an annual statement on the progress of any policy. And if it is unit-linked, the investor would usually be given the option of a free switch into other investment areas.

He said: "Nobody wrote to me suggesting that I should switch my investment into another area. I didn't even receive any annual reports from Regency, although I did when Aegon took over."

Aegon Financial Services (AFS), which sold policies via a direct sales force for most of the 1990s, has now fallen into the hands of the Life Assurance Holding Corporation, a venture company set up to acquire ailing insurance companies. The administration for AFS policies is carried out by Scottish Equitable, which is also owned by Aegon, a large Dutch insurer based in The Hague. Scott White, an Aegon

spokesman, said that only around 1,000 people bought the Regency Universal Savings Plan. "The charges on the policy were fairly standard for the time, and you must remember that the policy also offered life assurance cover worth 75 per cent of the total premiums. The key factor appears to be the type of investment selected. If he had chosen Regency's balanced fund, his policy would have been worth £5,200."

"The policy was sold before the Financial Services Act, and Regency would have simply set up the contract as instructed. The saleswoman was working on a general agency agreement, not a restricted agency basis, which means she wasn't a direct saleswoman for Regency but could sell the products of several different companies."

Mr White added that policyholders with Scottish Equitable are sent an annual statement on the progress of their policy, including a switch form for anybody who wants to move their investments around.

What lessons can be learnt from Mr Agrawala's misfortune? Mr Agrawala is the first to say that he did not properly monitor his investment, impeded by the lack of information from Regency. "It goes to show the pitfalls of not monitoring the investments, particularly unit-linked ones with insurance companies."

Mr Kohn added: "It says a lot about the structure of charges at the time, but a lot has been done since then to ensure investors have more information to allow them to make a more informed choice."

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صكنا من الامل

Caroline Merrell tunes in to the options available to Liam and Noel Gallagher



Britpop shock: wild rockers Liam Gallagher, left, and his brother Noel are reported to have invested around £12 million in pensions products

What's the pensions story?

Pensions planning, an activity that was once the province of the prudent wage slave, has attracted the attention of Noel and Liam Gallagher, the tearaway brothers of the Britpop band Oasis.

In an uncharacteristically mature move, the brothers are reported to have poured a total of £12 million into pensions, perhaps in an effort to beat the labyrinthine carry forward and carry back rules that allow unused pension allowances of several years to be used up before the end of the tax year.

Liam, at 25, the younger of the two brothers, is said to have chosen to invest a total of £5 million in some species of pension plan. His youth means that he is entitled to invest a maximum of 17.5 per cent of his annual income in a personal pension plan. The Revenue, however, caps the amount of earnings on which pension contributions can be based. With the earnings cap currently set at £84,000, Liam may

invest only £14,700 in the current tax year, although he would also benefit from 40 per cent tax relief (£5,880).

It seems unlikely that the younger Gallagher would have made a pension provision before this point, so his financial adviser may have allocated some more of his millions under the carry back provisions which allow you to exploit any unused allowances from the previous year.

This could be of benefit if, by some extraordinary quirk of the rock business, he had only paid tax at the basic rate of 23 per cent in the previous year. Any carry back payment would attract tax relief at the rate of the year in which the contribution was made.

If Liam Gallagher wants to make this extra pension provision, and in the unlikely event that he is classified as self-employed, then he would have had to alert the Revenue via his self-assessment form. Any tax relief on the contribution that

had been carried back would be returned to Gallagher via a refund of tax.

Gallagher could also make some contributions under the carry forward scheme. This allows unused pension allowances from previous years to be used up.

The carry forward provisions relate to up to six years previously, so if at the tender age of 19, Liam Gallagher had contributed less than 17.5 per cent of net relevant earnings in to a pension, then he can choose to invest any shortfall this year. However, he can only use up these past pension contributions if he has made the maximum contribution this year.

Noel Gallagher's allowances are very similar to those of his brother; he, too, is allowed to invest only 17.5 per cent of his annual salary in a personal pension, subject to the overall cap of £84,000. In five years' time, the amount Noel can invest will increase to 20 per

cent. This rises to a total of 40 per cent when the Gallaghers reach the ripe old age of 61.

Because both brothers' earnings exceed the earnings cap, they face the problem of saving enough in a pensions scheme to ensure that they can continue to enjoy the trappings of stardom in their dotage. In order to do this, they could choose to invest in a Funded Unapproved Retirement Benefit Scheme (Rubs), which provides retirement benefits for those affected by the earnings cap. The fact

that one of these schemes is "unapproved" simply means that no tax relief is given on contributions.

Another way they could get around the earnings cap would be to set up a series of companies based around different parts of their businesses, according to Charles Levett-Scrivener, of Towry Law, the financial advisers. He said: "They could then set up many different schemes. Each one would benefit from its own earnings cap."

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Take action before end of tax year

If you are inspired by Liam and Noel's example, you should act before the end of the tax year. There are rumours that the Chancellor may be planning to abolish higher rate relief on pensions. Although some would say this is unlikely given that pensions and pension provision are currently the subject of a review, this did not stop Gordon Brown from withdrawing the dividend tax credit given to pension funds in his first Budget.

You can contribute up to 15 per cent of your salary to a company pension. If you are not paying in the full amount, you can make additional voluntary contributions (AVCs). The Inland Revenue permits you to pay from 17.5 per cent to 40 per cent of your earnings into a pension, depending on your age. Only personal pension plan holders can use the carry forward and carry back

provisions, so taking advantage of the unused reliefs of the previous six years. If you have badly neglected your pension in the past, you should consult a financial adviser or actuary specialising in personal pensions.

You should look for a plan that allows you to vary your contributions and to take contribution holidays without penalty. Plans with initial units are to be avoided because these are, simply, a way of paying more commission to middlemen. Chartwell Investment Management (01225 446556) publishes a guide to "clean pensions" (price £12.50). These are flexible plans with low charges. BEST Investment has prepared a guide to best-buy personal pensions that lists worst buys £9.99 (0171-321 0100).

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*Source: Mercury Asset Management. Based on buying to selling Distribution prices (16.84-1.2.98) (illustrative only as PEPs were not introduced until 1987). 5-year equivalent: 25.3% Income Growth; 74.5% Capital Growth. The value of investments and income from them may fluctuate and are not guaranteed. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. In some or all of the annual charge is deducted from capital rather than income. Whilst this has the effect of increasing the yield it may reduce the potential for capital growth. A 2% discount on the buying price of units for lump sum investments of £1,000 or more in the Mercury 1997/98 PEP. The tax treatment of PEPs will be changed in April 1999. The Mercury Income Fund is managed by Mercury Fund Managers Ltd (regulated by HMRC and the Personal Investment Authority) the unit trust management arm of Mercury Asset Management plc. The Mercury PEPs are managed by Mercury Asset Management plc (regulated by HMRC). It is issued by Mercury Investment Services Ltd, 33 King William Street, London EC4P 4BS <http://www.mam.com> which is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and represents only the Mercury Marketing Group and its packaged products which include unit trusts, PEPs and pensions. For your protection, telephone calls are usually recorded.

Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance, the value of shares and the income produced by them can, especially over the short term, go down as well as up. There is always the chance that you will not get back your original investment. Broker Financial Services Plc is the investment manager of the Geared Income Investment Trust Plc.

The **BFS Geared Income PEP** topped the February 1998 Daily Telegraph PEP guide with 63% growth over one year (with income reinvested). To find out more about this top-performing PEP, please call us on 01483 237773.

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The flotation of the building societies created millions of new shareholders. Those who decided to retain their shares are slowly being educated in the ways of the stock market. The subject of the latest lesson for Halifax investors is the share buyback.

During the announcement of its 1997 profits, the bank revealed that it would be spending up to £1 billion buying back its own shares. The Halifax also announced its 17.5p per share dividend for the year, payable on May 11 and worth £57.75 to a customer with the average holding of 330 shares.

The share buyback programme was greeted unenthusiastically by some analysts because they believed that the Halifax should have used some of its £4 billion in spare cash to pay shareholders a special one-off dividend, like the Woolwich. As investors are discovering, the value of a share buyback to shareholders is far more difficult to quantify.

Q What exactly is a share buyback?

A share buyback is when a company goes into the market to buy its own shares at a certain price. The company then cancels the shares. A smaller number of shares



means that earnings per share are greater. Only companies that have a surplus of cash are in a position to carry out such examples of financial engineering.

shares that are included in the FTSE 100 index (Footsie) of leading shares, with the aim of imitating the performance of the index. The Halifax is a Footsie stock.

chief executive, claims that the prices of UK shares are just too high at the moment for him to make a purchase. He said: "There is an awful lot of froth."

strong run, but low inflation and low interest rates mean that shares in the financials could still continue to rise. There is also a possibility that the Halifax will buy another company, when it is prudent to do so. Making the correct purchase could be good for the share price.

Q When will the Halifax pay the dividend?

A The dividend will be paid out by the company on May 11, while the ex-dividend date will be March 9. If shares are bought on or after this date through a broker the new owner will not be entitled to receive the May 1998 dividend.

Q How will the dividend be paid to shareholders?

A The dividend will be paid directly into the account holding the shares, or by cheque if the shareholders did not specify the account. This dividend relates to the full financial year of 1997. In future, dividends will normally be paid half-yearly in May and October.

Q Will the share buyback have any effect on the way shareholders buy and sell shares?

A No, anyone will be able to buy and sell shares in the usual way through their brokers.

Q Should shareholders sell their stock?

A In spite of the fact that shares in the Halifax are trading at 20 times earnings, many believe that the shares are still worth holding. The banking sector has had a very

Q At what price will the Halifax buy back the shares?

A The Halifax refused to reveal the price that it was willing to pay for its shares. But on Wednesday Merrill Lynch, the broker, spent around £46 million buying up shares at 96½p.

Q What other action could the Halifax have taken to use up surplus capital?

A The Halifax could have spent the money in the same way as the Woolwich, by paying a special dividend to shareholders.

Many brokers with small shareholder clients feel that this might be a much better way of dealing with the excess capital than going through a buyback programme. Some analysts believe that the Halifax should use its capital to purchase another company.

Q Why is the Halifax buying back the shares?

A The Halifax suffers from having an excess of capital, around £4 billion to be precise. The board believes that spending £1 billion on its own shares will be better for shareholders than leaving the money as cash, which will earn around 7 per cent interest.

Q What is the effect of a share buyback on the price of stock?

A share buyback effectively underpins the share price because as soon as the price falls to a certain level, the Halifax's brokers, Merrill Lynch and Cazenove, will step in to mop up the stock.

The investing institutions, who hold around a third of the shares of Halifax, are unlikely to sell because many now run index-tracker trusts. These trusts must hold the same

any doubt about their suitability you should obtain expert advice. The value of investments may go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount of your investment.

any state calls will usually be recorded and randomly monitored.

Name _____
Address _____
Postcode _____ Daytime Telephone _____

32 Eagle Gifford
Sharnbrook Management
PO BOX 1041 1997
Sharnbrook
Wetherby
LS19 7QJ

صَلُّوا مِنْ الْإِجْلِ

THE TIMES MONEY INFORMATION SERVICE

Tessa boosted as rates rise to 8%

Tessa rates at Norwich and Peterborough Building Society are to rise on Tuesday. The variable interest rate on the Tessa Select (first Tessa) and Tessa Elite II (follow-on Tessa) will be 3 per cent gross, up from 7.85 per cent. Only one Tessa may be held at a time by an investor and interest is credited on the anniversary of the account being opened. The minimum investment is £100, and the maximum is £9,000. Both accounts are subject to loss of interest if the account is closed or transferred.

■ The Inland Revenue is asking taxpayers to give their views on self-assessment. Comments on what aspects of the form-filling went well and what aspects need improvement are particularly sought. Write to Civil Hall, Inland Revenue, Business Operations Division, Room 416, South West Wing, Bush House, Strand, London, WC2B 4RD, to arrive by May 29. Specific comments on, or inquiries about, personal tax affairs should be discussed

with your local tax office.

■ Ten of the most commonly asked questions on stakeholder pensions have been answered in Legal & General's free factsheet. It explains the tax advantages in opting for a stakeholder pension, how much it will cost you, and if it is better for you to stay with your employer's pension scheme. Call 0800-909 090 for a copy or visit L&G's Website on www.landg.com.

■ English Heritage is keeping its joining fees at 1997 prices until April 1 this year. A family of two adults and all children under 21 can enjoy a year's unlimited free access to more than 120 properties and historic sites, such as Stonehenge, for £40. Members also receive free entry to Charles Darwin's home, Down House, Kent, which is due to open this April. Individual memberships are adults, £23; 20-year-olds, £14.50; and juniors, £10. Telephone 01793 3434 for an application form before March 13, or you can pay by credit card over the telephone by March 31.

LIZANNE ROSE

GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS

ANNUAL INCOME

Rates as at February 26, 1998

Investment (£)	Company	Standard Rate (%)
1 Year		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.00
10,000	GE Fin Assur	6.60
2 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.45
3,000	ITT Lon & Edin	5.95
10,000	GE Fin Assur	6.32
3 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.35
3,000	ITT London & Ed	6.05
20,000	GE Fin Assur	6.08
50,000	GE Fin Assur	6.13
4 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.50
3,000	ITT London & Ed	5.95
10,000	Hambro Assured	5.95
5 Years		
1,000	Hambro Assured	5.40
3,000	ITT London & Ed	5.80
10,000	Hambro Assured	5.85

Source: Chambers of Stock 0171-434 2222. Net rates. Income and capital guaranteed. Early surrender, Terms vary. Monthly income may be available.

SAVERS' BEST BUYS

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Standard Life Bank 0345 555657	Instant	£1	6.96	Y/y
Southwest Bank 0845 8450820	Instant	£100	7.00	Y/y
Safeway 0800 969695	Instant	£1,000	7.30	Y/y
Northern Rock 0845 600 6767	Instant	£5,000	7.80	Y/y

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
Scarbrough BS 01723 500616	30 day	£1,000	7.60	Y/y
Bristol & West 0800 202121	30 day p	£10,000	7.80	Y/y
Northern Rock 0800 505000	90 day p	£10,000	7.90	Y/y
Birmingham Midshires 0845 720721	120 day	£10,000	7.95	Y/y

Account	Notice of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest paid
First Tessa (Tax Free)	5 year	£100	8.00	Y/y
Norwich & Peterborough BS 01733 372222	5 year	£500	8.00	Y/y
Bradford & Bingley BS 0800 592588	5 year	£1,800	7.95	Y/y
Lambeth BS 0800 326632	5 year	£500	7.90	Y/y
Mansfield BS 01248 202055	5 year	£500	7.90	Y/y

CREDIT CARDS BEST BUYS

Credit Cards	Card type	Interest per month	APR%	Fee per annum
Capital One Bank 0800 669000	Visa	0.57%N	6.90%N	NB
RBS Advantage 0800 077770	Visa	0.64%N	7.90%N	NB
Co-operative Bank 0800 108000	Advantage Visa	0.69%N	8.60%N	NB

PERSONAL LOANS BEST BUYS

Personal Loans	APR	Monthly payment on £5,000 for 3 yrs with insurance	with no insurance
Northern Rock 0345 421421	9.90%N	£183.13	£186.11
First Line 0181 680 9696	12.80%N	£183.75	£186.38
RBS Direct 0800 121125	12.80%	£186.15	£186.38

NB: A = Minimum age 22 years, B = Operated by post or telephone, C = no interest free period, F = Fixed Rate, H = If insurance not arranged APR 12.7 per cent, I = Introductory rate for a limited period, P = Operated by Post, T = Operated by Telephone.

* RATES SHOWN ARE GROSS AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE. PLEASE CHECK RATES BEFORE INVESTING. Source: Moneyfacts, the Monthly Guide to Investment & Mortgage Rates (01892 500 677)

PIBS

Fixed Rate	Gross coupon	Buying price	Gross yield	Issue price	Minimum purchase amount
Birmingham Midshires	9.375%	126.50	7.41	100.17	1,000
Bradford & Bingley	11.625%	154.25	7.54	100.13	10,000
Bradford & Bingley	13.000%	172.75	7.53	100.20	10,000
Britannia	13.000%	174.00	7.47	100.42	1,000
Coventry	12.125%	160.25	7.57	100.75	10,000
First National	11.750%	157.25	7.47	100.25	1,000
Leeds & Holbeck	13.375%	184.25	7.25	100.23	1,000
Newcastle	10.750%	151.75	7.08	100.32	1,000
Newcastle	12.625%	176.50	7.15	100.45	1,000
Skipton	12.875%	179.75	7.16	100.48	1,000

PERPETUAL SUBORDINATED BONDS

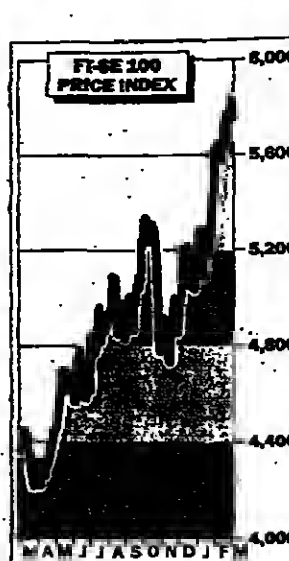
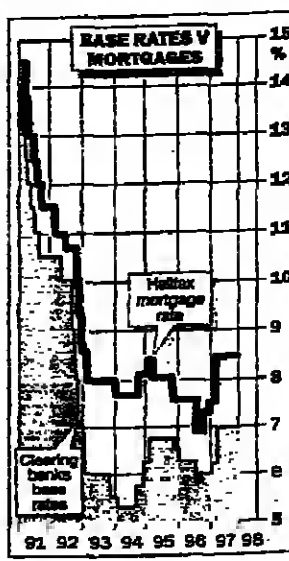
Bank of Gloucester	11.750%	159.50	7.37	100.98	50,000
Halifax	8.750%	116.25	7.53	100.62	50,000
Halifax	12.000%	155.25	7.83	100.28	50,000
Halifax	13.630%	187.00	7.28	100.00	50,000
Bristol & West	13.380%	179.50	7.45	100.34	1,000
Northern Rock	12.625%	168.00	7.47	100.14	1,000

PIBS=Permanent Interest-bearing Shares. Source: Greenwich Halfway

SHARE IN FOCUS: ZENITH FALLS TO MEET CITY EXPECTATIONS




Source: City of London



Source: MAM/JASON/JFM

	Gross rate	At test rates 35% 40%	Minimum/maximum investment £	Notice	Contact
Ordinary A/c	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**		0845 845000
Investment A/c*	4.75	3.80	2.252-1,498**	1mth	0845 845000
Income Bond*	7.00	5.60	4,000-25,000**	3mth	0845 845000
First Opt Bonds	6.75	5.40	4,051,000-20,000**		0845 845000
45th Issue Certs	5.00		100-10,000	8day	0845 845000
Children's Bonds	6.25		25-1,000	1mth	0845 845000
Gen Est Rate	3.51				0845 845000
Capital Bonds	6.25	5.00	100-250,000	8day	0845 845000
12th Ind Linereds	2.50		100-10,000	8day	0845 845000
Persana Bond SA	6.80	5.20	3.90-50,000	60day	0845 845000

* best ETD (£140 p) of test rates, best assets for up to £100 ** Unlimited admissible funds: £10m limit - dealer prices and fees guaranteed when held for 515 days
 2.25% net return for £25,000+ **100,000 if in addition to SL, SP and S3 holdings**100,000+100,000 own higher rates. **Fixed rates apply
 cred 31 Jul '92 1500-100,000 own higher rates.



All figures are the gross annual annuity (£100,000
 purchase), guaranteed 5 years, paid monthly in advance

* Not ETD (E/T) of net fee, net fees for £100. ** Unquoted additional fees for additional products. * For fees - please contact your adviser. * For fees - please contact your adviser. * For fees - please contact your adviser.

All figures are the gross annual annuity (£100,000 purchase), guaranteed 5 years, paid monthly in advance

SINGLE LIFE (level ann)	Male: Age 60	Age 65	Age 70
Sun Life	£8,840	£9,772	£11,288
Canada Life	£8,887	£9,754	£11,235
Legal & General	£8,843	£9,688	£11,006
Commercial Union	£8,822	£9,692	£11,382
Standard Life	£8,516	£9,620	£11,048

Source: Annual Direct (0171 804 5000)

Statistics compiled by Lizanne Rose

Lender	Interest rate %	Loan size	Max %	Notes
Bank of Ireland	0.99	£20-145k	95	Fixed for 6 mths more disc, £280 fee
01189 884300				
Bristol & West	3.98	no max	75	Fixed to 1.4.00
0800 119955				
Newbury	5.10	£30-100k	95	£295 fee
01835 43676				
Wesleyan	5.35	to £100k	95	3.25% disc
0121 200 033				
Alliance & Leicester	5.69	£20-300k	95	Fixed to 1.3.00, £150 fee
0345 108108				

* buildings and contents cover compulsory

Larger lenders, loans and first-time buyers rates by City of London (01753 880482)

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AFCON LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
AFCON LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

BLACK HORSE LIFE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
BLACK HORSE LIFE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

BRITANNIA

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
BRITANNIA	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

CANADIAN LIFE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
CANADIAN LIFE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

CITY OF WESTMINSTER ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
CITY OF WESTMINSTER ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

CLERICAL MEDICAL/TOILET

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
CLERICAL MEDICAL/TOILET	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

EQUITY & LAW LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
EQUITY & LAW LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

GUARANTY LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
GUARANTY LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

HAMBRO ASSURED

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
HAMBRO ASSURED	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

INDEPENDENT LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
INDEPENDENT LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

NATURAL LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
NATURAL LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

NORWICH & PETERBOROUGH BUILDING SOCIETY

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
NORWICH & PETERBOROUGH BUILDING SOCIETY	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

GUARDIAN LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
GUARDIAN LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

HAMBRO ASSURED

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LIFE ASSURANCE

Product	Rate	Term	Notice	Contact
LIFE ASSURANCE	2.00	1.80	10-10,000**	0845 845000

WEEKEND

Waiver of premium is essential for life assurance

From Dr Philip R. Thomas

Sir, The anti-consumer nature of Virgin's life assurance policies was highlighted by Gordon Maw's curt dismissal of waiver of premium as one of the bells and whistles added to such policies (Marks & Spencer adds the bells and whistles, February 21).

Waiver of premium is neither a bell nor a whistle but an essential option offered with any worthwhile life assurance policy.

The option allows a person who is too ill to work to have the premiums paid by the life company for the duration of the illness or until the policy expires and does not interfere with their right to convert to another policy without evidence of health where such an option exists.

In terms of rates offered in Hazel Spinks's example, Scottish Widows is cheaper than any of the companies quoted and almost £1 a month cheaper than Virgin.

Therefore, over the 25-year period referred to, Virgin would gain in excess of £250 extra premiums. This amount would double when the commission, which Scottish Widows pays but Virgin does not, is taken into account.

Yours faithfully,
PHILIP THOMAS,
Thomas Financial Planning,
439 Clock Face Road,
St Helens,
Merseyside,
WA9 4QL.

Conventional wisdom seems crazy

From Mr Peter Kellow

Sir, We are constantly being advised in the columns of Weekend Money that we must invest heavily in personal pensions.

But what about the downside to investing in pensions, as opposed to another form of investment, as follows?

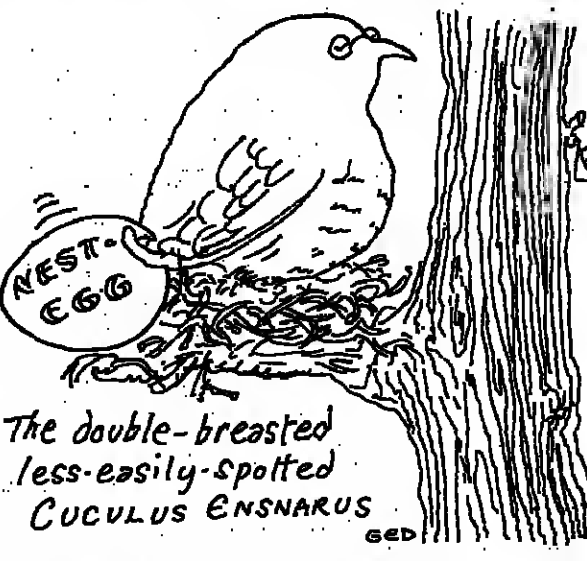
1) You do not avoid tax on contributions. You simply delay it, for you will pay tax on the pension income. The accumulation of the fund may have been tax-free in the past, but:

2) After the abolition of advance corporation tax, money in a pension pays tax twice (unlike other investments), once on yearly dividend payments and again on cashing in.

3) You disinherit your loved ones, as most of the pension fund has to buy an annuity, which also means:

4) Because you are locked in to annuities for your pension, you will be stuck with annuities as an investment during your retirement.

These are producing lower and lower returns against



in the low-interest world of economic and monetary union could be catastrophic. 5) Your money is locked up in the pension fund should you need to resolve a problem or develop an opportunity. 6) Exorbitant pension fund management and set-up fees. Many funds underperform and there is absolutely no

State pension fears are justified

From Mr G.E. Morris

Sir, Your correspondent Mr J Batstone (State pension for those near retirement, Weekend Money Letters, February 21) who expressed his worry that the state pension may be means-tested, has good grounds for concern.

The Chancellor has already raised the tax on private pension funds via advance corporation tax to the tune of £5.2 billion (equivalent to 2.5p on the basic rate of tax) and

removed tax relief on private health insurance for the elderly.

Means-testing of free prescriptions for the elderly is under consideration.

With that background, who would be surprised if the "affluent" pensioners lost their state pension to means-testing?

If 10 per cent of payments were avoided in this way, the Treasury would save £3.2 billion, making the total haul

from pensioners around £8 billion — equivalent to 4p on the basic rate of tax but without the associated hassle of doing that.

Although Mr Blair has said that the state pension is secure in his hands, I would feel happier were it in mine.

Yours sincerely,
G. MORRIS,
32 Church Street,
Ramsay,
Hampshire,
SO51 8BU.

On Tuesday the Halifax

announced a 15 per cent increase in profits to £1.65 billion. Despite the increase, the Halifax shares fell 25p to 950p. The former building society also said it would buy back £1 billion of its shares over the next year, but did not give any price or strategy details. Analysts were disappointed that a more aggressive plan for dealing with its £4 billion of surplus cash had not been put forward.

THE performance of UK pension funds lagged behind

the stock market last year

because managers failed to pick the right equities, according to a survey by the WM Company. UK equity holdings in pension funds produced an average return of 22.6 per cent in 1997, a full percentage point behind the FTSE All-share index, which grew by 23.5 per cent over the same period.

A £25,000 fine was imposed

on Britannia Assurance by the Personal Investment Authority

on Tuesday for failures in its review of personal pension mis-selling. This is the fourth fine meted out by the PIA over the pensions review in as many months. Britannia must also pay £125,000 costs.

THE Inland Revenue is seeking to recover hundreds of millions of pounds in tax

credits paid out to pension funds prior to the closure of a tax avoidance loophole

in 1996. Officials from the Revenue's compliance department have asked pension funds to provide details of any holdings related to "windfall" gains in connection with buybacks and special dividends between September 1, 1994, and October 8, 1996. If pension fund managers are found to have invested undue amounts of money in a buy-back or special dividend, then they may be forced to repay any tax credits.



A winning investor

Manek Growth Fund and PEP

£80m under management

Jayesh Manek, winner of the two Sunday Times Fantasy Fund Manager Competitions, has been given a resounding vote of confidence by private investors.

The Manek Growth Fund has attracted more than 16,000 investors since the launch in Nov 97.

Sir John Templeton, the legendary investment guru, has transferred £14.5m of his personal funds which were already entrusted to Jayesh's management into the new Fund. Total funds under management, as at 19.2.98, exceed £80 million.

The Manek Growth Fund and PEP

The Fund is an Authorised Unit Trust and fully PEPable, designed to make Jayesh Manek's investment skills available directly to all investors. The Fund targets outstanding growth opportunities principally through investment in UK equities. It is intended that the Fund will not invest in unquoted companies.

The Manager is Manek Investment Management Limited. Its Chairman is Stanislas Yassukovich CBE, a former Deputy Chairman of the London Stock Exchange and currently Chairman of EASDAQ. The Hon Crispin Money-Coutts is a non-executive director. The Royal Bank of Scotland plc are the Trustees of the Fund.

Act now

You can invest in the Manek Growth Fund and PEP from £1,000 lump sum or £50 monthly. With the end of the PEP year approaching, the Fund offers an excellent opportunity to combine capital growth potential with the tax benefits of a PEP.

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Manek Growth Fund ☐ Manek Growth PEP ☐ PEP Transfer ☐

Print Name (Mr/Ms/Ms) _____ Address _____ Postcode _____

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Analysts are cool about SocGen's new unit trust, says Jill Insley

Horlick factor fails to impress (for once)

Setting up a new company with Nicola Horlick at its helm must be a marketing man's dream. Ms Horlick has generated enough free publicity over the past year to launch 100 new companies, let alone one.

Cynics may suggest it is the high profile Ms Horlick, gained during her acrimonious departure from Morgan Grenfell that has encouraged Société Générale, the international bank, to appoint her a joint managing director of its new fund management arm, SocGen Asset Management. But the company itself emphasises the importance of teamwork, and says that its first product designated for the public will not actually be managed by Ms Horlick.

The SocGen UK Growth unit trust will be managed by Peter Seabrook, previously the UK chief investment officer for Flemings. Mr Seabrook aims to outperform the UK All Share Index by 3 per cent to 4 per cent a year by bringing long-term, institutional-style investment techniques to retail products.

He will concentrate on growth shares in the FTSE 350. This index, which covers the top 350 companies in the UK, rose by 84 per cent last year. Stock buying and selling will be limited, which will reduce dealing costs.

Rather unusually, the fund's portfolio will be limited to about 40 to 45 stocks: most unit trust portfolios carry 100 stocks or more.

If he succeeds in beating the FTSE All Share by 3 per cent, it will position the fund in the top 25 per cent of UK growth funds in the immediate future, and, over a longer term, in the top 10 per cent.

Graham Hooper of Chase de Vere, the Bath independent financial adviser, says a strategy of limited but consistent outperformance on an index is similar to that adopted by Mercury a few years ago. "And it has certainly worked for Mercury," he says.

Mr Seabrook says he will pay particular attention to several areas of the companies. They are the strength of management; cashflow after capital expenditure and the payment of dividends; the



Strong: Nicola Horlick leads team with a fine pedigree

quality of accounting; factors which affect the price attained by services or products produced by the company; and the company's strength in its own industry.

A trial portfolio gathered before last Monday's launch included familiar names such as Legal & General, Shell, Railtrack, Abbey National, Axa and Zeneca. He says there is nothing new about his approach to growth investment, but adds: "There is still plenty of opportunity to make money."

Investors can invest directly in units, or via a personal equity plan. The minimum initial lump sum investment is £1,000, and additional amounts from £250 can be invested at any time. The

SocGen UK Growth trust also offers a regular savings plan, of £50 or more a month.

The charge will be an initial fee of 5.25 per cent of the amount invested and an annual fee of 1.5 per cent. Investors who buy into the trust before March 17 will receive a 2 per cent discount in the form of bonus units.

Independent financial advisers are not particularly impressed with the charges, which are standard for many unit trusts, and verging on the expensive for a fund with no track record. Nor are they familiar with the work of SocGen, which has only worked on the institutional side of fund management.

Nevertheless, they are impressed by the potential of

fered by a fund management team that not only employs Ms Horlick, but John Richards, who was formerly with Mercury as its joint managing director, and John Ioss who comes from Prolific as the head of retail.

Amanda Davidson of Holden Meehan, a London independent financial adviser, says: "The team has a good pedigree, and we feel generally favourable about the new fund. We think that it should do well for a couple of years. Its size, and the fact the manager is designing a portfolio from scratch to suit today's investment conditions, makes it easier to manage. He won't be hampered by poor performing shares already in the portfolio."

This is not enough to convince Ms Davidson and other independent financial advisers to recommend the new unit trust. The consensus is that the investment team is fine, but the lack of a track record is a problem.

Ms Davidson says: "We probably won't be giving it a lot of support because there are a lot of established funds out there with good performance, so why go for one without one?"

Douglas Gardener, of the Leeds independent financial adviser Thomson Financial Planning, agrees. He says: "I'm struggling to see anything different about this fund that is not already on offer elsewhere."

March is a key investment period for many investors who want to make the most of their PEP allowances before the end of the tax year. But Mr Gardener questions whether this is the best time to be investing in the UK stock market.

"The stock market has been hitting new highs for some time now. I would feel more comfortable about this launch if they offered a drip-feed option, allowing investors to put a lump sum towards a PEP which is then gradually invested in the market over six months," he says.

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Are trackers about to run out of steam?

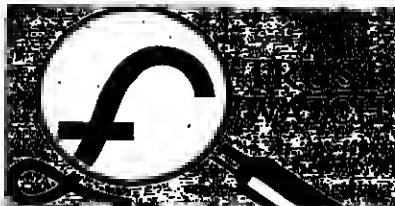


With hindsight, the launch of Richard Branson's financial services division three years ago could not have been better timed. Virgin Direct entered the PEP market with a fund that tracked the index just as the UK stock market began a period of strong growth. Virgin has also taken a very aggressive stance against the fund management industry to gain market share. Among its many targets has been Perpetual, which has one of the best records in the industry. Roger Cornick, Perpetual sales director, likened Virgin's index-tracking PEP to a Skoda at the launch, while claiming that his company's Peps were more like an Aston Martin. Three years on, Rowan Gormley, Virgin Direct's managing director,

points out that his company's PEP has outperformed all of Perpetual's Peps since launch. Mr Gormley said: "The Virgin Growth PEP not only boasts cheaper running costs than Perpetual's funds but also outperforms them."

However, in the three years since the launch of Virgin's PEP, other managers have entered the index-tracking market, including Direct Line, Legal & General and M&G, the latter company struggling under a weight of criticism concerning the performance of its managed funds.

BEST Investment, which analyses the performance of Peps, believes Virgin Peps are no longer a good buy. Jason Hollands, of BEST Investment, said: "With tracking funds, the main criteria are cost and



whether they track the index. Virgin has a perfectly reasonable PEP, but it no longer has the lowest cost base. It is probably not the right time in any case to buy an index-tracker. The market cannot go on upwards. Trackers are last year's story."

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If you are unimpressed by the off-the-shelf managed Peps and want more direct involvement in stock selection, a self-select PEP which allows you to use your £6,000 general PEP allowance could be for you.

In other words, if you believe you can outperform the professional fund managers, you can take control by the self-select option. The manager running the fund buys and sells specific shares, bonds or unit and investment trusts, on your instructions.

Self-select Peps are offered by stockbrokers and the stock-broking arms of the major banks, such as Lloyds and



Barclays. These firms act as the PEP manager — setting up the fund and reclaiming any tax due, but, relying on your decisions to buy or sell specific holdings that qualify for PEP investment.

Self-select plans are often more expensive than the

mass-marketed general PEP, so you need to be confident your gains will exceed the two sets of charges you will face.

Every time you decide to change the composition of your fund, you must pay dealing charges, just as you would if you were buying or selling on the stock market. Both Lloyds and Barclays charge 1.5 per cent of the value of each transaction, subject to minimums of £18.50 and £15 respectively.

On top of dealing charges, which will obviously grow in line with the number of changes you make to your portfolio, there are annual management fees to pay as well. Lloyds charges 0.25 per

cent of the fund's value, with a minimum of £45 and a maximum of £195, while Barclays is even more expensive at 1 per cent, subject to minimum and maximum fees of £25 and £250.

If you are not putting the full £6,000 annual limit into a PEP and want something less expensive, Share Centre offers a low-cost Bonanza General self-select scheme with dealing fees of 1 per cent and with a minimum of just £2.50 for purchases and £7.50 for sales, provided the shares that are traded are in the FTSE 100 index.

A comprehensive guide to Peps containing details of more than 1,000 schemes has been published by Chase de Vere Investments and is currently available at a special price of £4.95, with the proceeds going to the NSPCC. Or the normal price is £12.95, which is refunded if you buy a PEP through Chase de Vere Investments. Telephone: 0800-526 092

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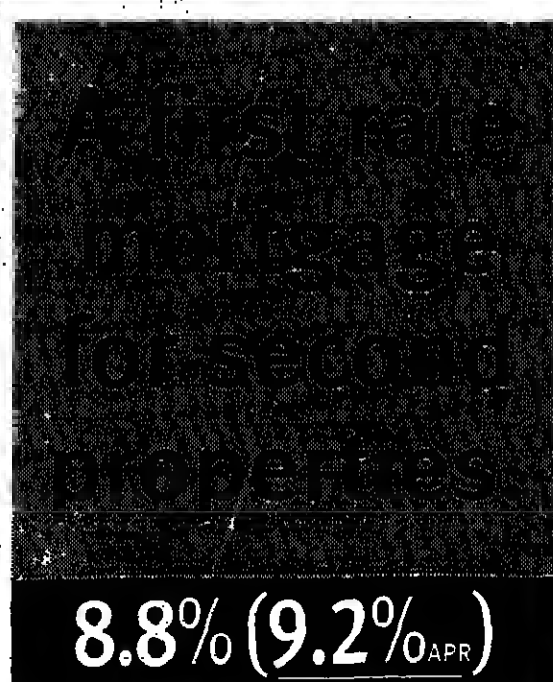
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RISING SUMS 52

Graham Searjeant
urges caution over
the Tokyo market

WEEKEND MONEY

PARTY POOPER 56

The ten-year policy
that didn't even pay
for a birthday card



DTI targets holiday insurance

Travel insurance premiums could drop dramatically if the Government opened up the market to competition, it was claimed this week. Ministers were urged to ban travel agents from linking compulsory insurance to special holiday discounts for customers.

A ruling on the issue is expected within weeks, but Direct Line, the telephone insurer, has expressed concern that the reforms may not go far enough.

The Department of Trade and Industry has been looking at the links between insurance and package holiday discounts. Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, is known to dislike the practice and is expected to outlaw it when she makes her ruling this month. Some travel agents charge up to 40 per cent commission on the policies they sell and most regard insurance as a very lucrative part of their business.

Direct Line, which has previously challenged the premiums and commission charged on motor and household policies, says this would not go far enough and has called on the Government to force more competition into the travel insurance market.

Graham Ross, head of Direct Line's household and travel insur-

Marianne Curphey says travel firms make huge profits from insurance

ance division, said travel companies were now looking at offering "free" insurance to customers, but this was nothing more than a "sham".

He said: "Travel insurance has a real cost which the consumer inevitably has to bear at some stage. What actually happens is the cost of the insurance policy is built into the overall cost of the holiday. In 1996, the big four travel agents between them made a profit of £130 million on travel insurance sales — over six times their overall operating profit. The idea that they can now genuinely offer this insurance free of charge is therefore highly questionable."

The DTI is currently mulling over the responses from the travel industry after an investigation into the issue last year. However, this week a report by Which?, the Consumers' Association magazine, claimed that the insurance available from travel agencies can be more than 70 per cent higher than through direct insurers.

Among the Best Buys recommended by Which? are Churchill Insurance and Family Care (see below). Notably absent are Lunn Poly (the travel agency owned by Thomson) and Thomas Cook, Going Places (owned

by Airtours) and First Choice. Which? found that for a family of four travelling to the US for three weeks, the cheapest deal from Churchill cost £66 and the most expensive, Thomson, Thomas Cook and Lunn Poly, cost £235, £246 and £248 respectively.

Mr Ross said: "Of course we have a vested interest in opening up the travel insurance market but we do believe that many of the policies currently available in travel agencies do not offer good value for money."

He added: "Several common practices discourage customers from exercising their choice. When you are arranging your holiday, the travel agent will often refuse to make the final booking for you unless you have insurance. When you have only just finalised the dates, it would have been impossible to set up a policy with a direct insurer in advance." Travel agents also often bundle insurance in with the overall price of the holiday package.

Mr Ross said: "Although there is evidence to suggest that the market has begun to change over the past

two years, a recent report estimated that in 1996, about £310 million was paid out in commission on travel insurance sales."

Which? magazine looked at more than 150 travel policies and found that four operators and travel agents' policies charged adults at least twice as much as the best value policies.

Even when the different rates of insurance premium tax (IPT) were factored in, the policies available through travel agencies looked overpriced. IPT is levied at 17.5 per cent on policies bought from travel agencies and four operators and at just 4 per cent on direct insurers, although insurers believe the latter rate could be increased to as much as 10 per cent in the Budget on March 17.

However, Which? said: "Even if IPT on Churchill's policy was at the full rate, this would add just 69 to the cost." Which? also points out that travel policies only usually give indemnity cover, and a deduction is made from any claim to take account of wear and tear, nor do the majority cover connecting flights.

Both Which? and Direct Line have expressed concern that staff in travel agents may not always know about

the small print of insurance policies. Which? recommends that when arranging a policy you ensure that you have cover for lost, stolen or damaged possessions up to a value of £1,500; cancellation and curtailment as standard; £1 million worth of medical expenses and £1 million public liability or £2 million, if travelling to the United States.

Churchill, which sells policies only over the telephone, said it aimed to offer good value "but not necessarily to be the cheapest if that meant compromising on the product that we offered".

Kay Gorman, from Churchill, said: "People should shop around and consider buying an annual policy. Many couples and families these days have more than one trip abroad and an annual policy could be more cost-effective."

Lunn Poly said it was disappointed by the recommendations that the link between discounts and insurance should be banned.

Peter Povey, the company's marketing director, said: "This link has been a major stimulus to price competition in the travel industry."

"The vast majority of Lunn Poly customers do not pay for their insurance as we offer it to them free of charge. We have been making them this offer for more than two years."



Holiday insurance is vital if you engage in adventurous sports but no one likes having to pay too much



Homebuyers, businesses and the City welcomed the decision by the Bank of England on Thursday to leave the cost of borrowing unchanged by keeping interest rates at 7.25 per cent.

The news pleased the City, where share prices had been dropping in anticipation of a rates rise, and it was also good news for homeowners, who otherwise would have had to face the sixth interest rate rise since the general election last May.

Nevertheless, economists believe there will be further rate rises over the next two years. They expect rates to peak at around 7.75 per cent sometime this summer.

Kieren Barr, who is UK economist with Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, said the Bank of England, which sets the base rates, is now adopting a "wait and see" policy.

"I am not anticipating rates to come down sharply next year, but expect to see them end 1999 at around 7.25 per cent," he said.

As a result of the uncertain-

Lenders push for longer-term fixes

ty about the direction of interest rates, growing numbers of homeowners are now choosing to take out fixed-rate mortgages, and more and more lenders are wooing them with highly attractive deals for what they call long-term fixes.

Mr Barr says 60 per cent of current new mortgages are fixed rates, although most of Britain's homeowners, around 80 per cent, are still firmly wedded to variable rates.

Among the best offers currently available for long-term fixes, according to the money information service Moneyfacts, is Bradford & Bingley's 6.99 per cent mortgage fixed until November 2003.

Newcastle Building Society has a 6.75 per cent loan available until May 2005. Clydesdale Bank also has a

6.99 per cent mortgage fixed for ten years. Each of these deals carries an arrangement fee, but none allows you to borrow 100 per cent of the property's value.

While there is a mass of two to five-year fixed mortgages, few lenders compete in the five to ten years range. However, one company, Britannia Building Society, is introducing a new 7½-year fixed rate, because research has shown that seven years is the average time people stay in their home before moving.

Britannia is launching its 7½-year mortgage today, at 6.99 per cent for buyers with a deposit (APR 7.3 per cent). For buyers who want to borrow 100 per cent of the value of the property, the rate is set at 7.49 per cent, to July 1, 2005.

The mortgage is available from Verso, the part of Britan-

nia which sells through brokers and independent financial advisers.

The deal has been developed for Britannia by Independent Mortgage Collection (IMC), a subsidiary of Private Label which was recently demerged from John Charcol mortgage brokers.

However, Patrick Bunton, of London & Country Mortgages, said first-time buyers in particular do not feel comfortable with more than a five-year fixed-term mortgage, and most commentators believed that long-term interest rates were now on a downward trend.

Now is IMC's offer a market-leader. Mr Bunton said: "Principality Building Society currently has a five-year fixed rate at 6.24 per cent which means that over that period the loan is 3½ per cent cheaper than the IMC deal."

"For the IMC deal to be competitive, interest rates in years six and seven would have to be very much higher than for the first five years."

MARIANNE CURPHEY

Northern says The Times has a point

In an attempt to counter criticism from irate savers, Northern Rock has this week pledged that each time it launches a new account or changes its rates, it will contact every customer. They will be informed of the rates payable on every account.

Last week The Times highlighted Northern Rock's unfortunate habit of introducing new accounts, with attractive rates, while allowing the rates on previous best buys to drop to uncompetitive levels.

We promised that we would keep a check on the rate offered on Save Direct Instant, the Northern Rock's latest account, to ensure that it did not follow the path to obscurity taken by so many of its predecessors. Three days later, the bank conceded we had a "good point" and changed its procedures.

However, the news of the launch next week of Save Direct Instant had already roused the ire of Northern Rock investors, particularly those in its Select 90 account who must give 90 days' notice if they wish to transfer to the new savings account.

For those with larger balances, the switch makes sense: Investors in Select 90 earn 8 per cent on an investment of £50,000 but they will receive 8.10 per cent in Save Direct Instant, with the valuable added extra of instant access. Some pointed out that the Northern Rock had only recently been promoting Select 90 which pays from 7.90-8.15 per cent on a minimum balance of £10,000.



'Switched on': Brian Tibbles has changed his account six times at Northern Rock

Brian Tibbles, a retired teacher from Roade, Northampton, has already given notice that he wishes to transfer to the new account. He will be entitled to move his money in June.

A Northern Rock customer for six years, he has transferred accounts six times in an attempt to keep pace with the ever-changing range of accounts at the bank.

The Northern Rock has no obsolete

accounts. But, with the addition of Save Direct Instant, it now has 16 different accounts.

Mr Tibbles deplores the Northern Rock's past practice of frequently issuing new accounts while allowing savers in other accounts to languish at lower rates. So he welcomes the bank's attempt to play fair with its customers.

ANNE ASHWORTH

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من الاداء

PROFILE



Cunningham:
the man
the farmers
love to
hate

Page 3

SHOPPING



Sporting
looks
in Lycra
and
lace

Page 5

COUNTRY LIFE



Healing
hands: the
saviour of
our wounded
wildlife

Page 18

TRAVEL



High
in the
hills of
unvisited
Jamaica

Page 29

SATURDAY MARCH 7 1998

THE TIMES WEEKEND

Prince who built a house of straw

The Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture is in disarray, key players have resigned, the school has closed and now a modernist is at its helm. Gavin Stamp explains why its founder is partly to blame

The Prince of Wales's controversial foray into architecture looks as if it is coming to a bloody end. February was a dismal month for the Institute of Architecture, the alternative school and research establishment founded by the Prince in London six years ago.

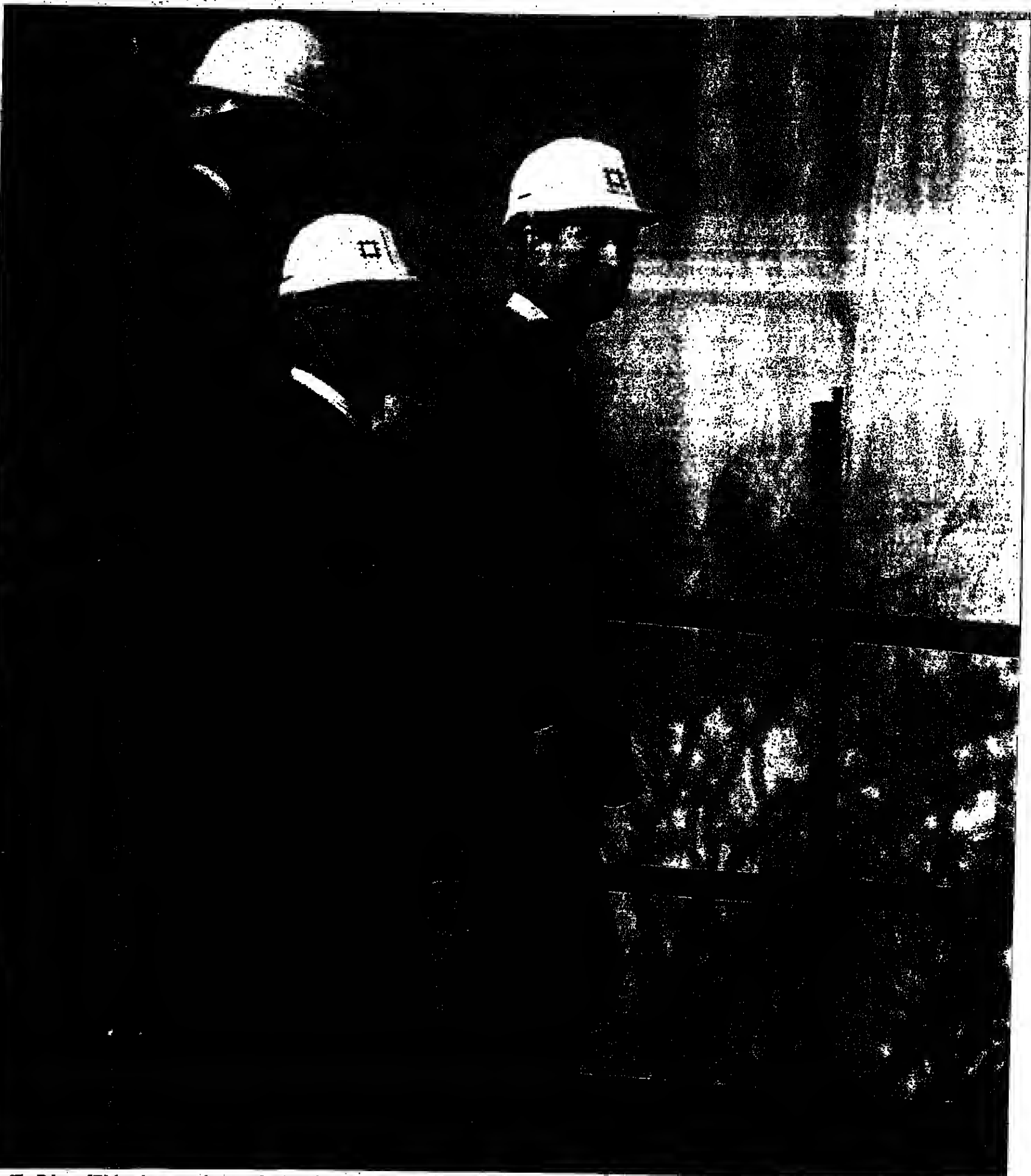
Not only was it proposing to change its name to the more nebulous Prince of Wales's School of Architecture and the Building Arts, but it was revealed that Richard Hodges, the director, Richard John, a previous director, Hugh Fetter, course co-ordinator, and Giles Worsley, the director of a "think-tank" that had never met, had all resigned.

Worsley was also the editor of *Perspectives on Architecture*, the magazine associated with the Institute which, after only three years of life, was also closed by the governing council last month.

But the news that has attracted most publicity is that a "modernist" had been made head of the school. This is Professor Adrian Gale, who has recently retired from running the Plymouth School of Architecture and who, having once worked for Mies van der Rohe — the great modern architect who originally designed the "glass stump" Baron Paimbo tried to inflict on the City of London — can be seen as belonging to the enemy camp in the polarised and puerile world of architectural politics.

It may seem, therefore, as if everything the Prince stood for has been defeated by the ruthless forces of modernism. An alternative explanation, however, might be that Professor Gale was looking for a new posting and his wife, who is a judge, is a friend of Lady Browne-Wilkinson, the lawyer who now chairs the Institute's new council. It looks, in fact, as if the Institute is in danger

Continued on page 2



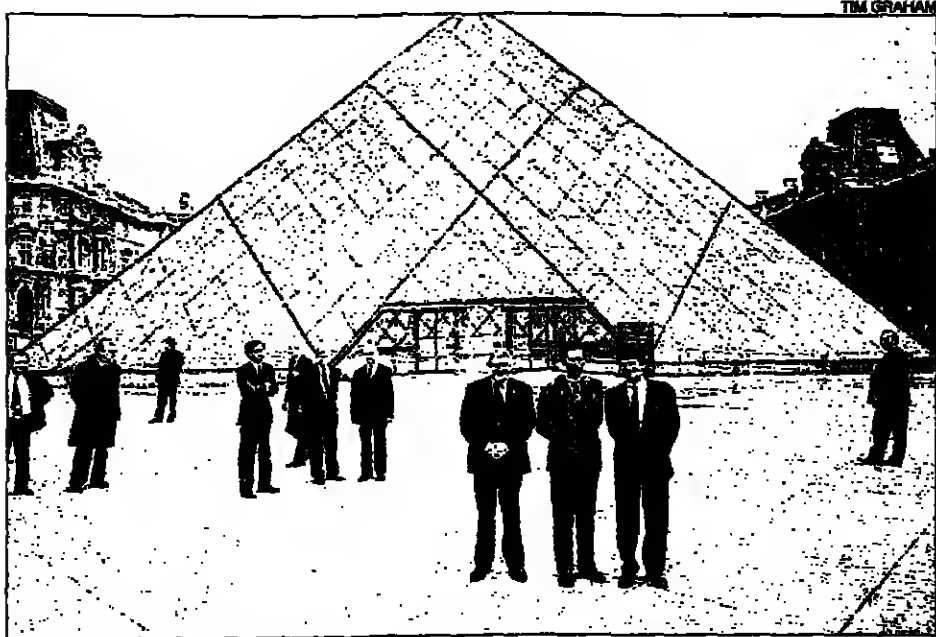
The Prince of Wales gives a royal stamp of approval in 1995 to the restoration of the Albert Memorial, the Victorian edifice opposite the Albert Hall in West London

SATURDAY MARCH 7 1998 THE TIMES GARDENING 16,17 COUNTRY LIFE 18,19 TRAVEL 25-35 GAMES 39,40

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During a 1988 trip to Paris the Prince described the Pyramide de Louvre as 'exciting'

Continued from page 1
of imploding through its own internal divisions rather than being crushed from outside.

But whatever the truth, it is clear that things are far from well in the two smart Regency houses next to Regent's Park where the Institute has been based since 1992.

The Prince entered the architectural debate in 1984 with the "carbuncle" speech to the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) at Hampton Court, and his Institute was intended to give practical expression to his unhappiness with the direction modern architecture had taken.

It was his "heartfelt hope", he said in his inaugural speech, "that students will be able to learn specific things — largely forgotten today — which will set the architecture of the future on a more realistic basis, less controlled by the images and fantasy as unfortunately the architecture of the last 50 years has often been. Instead, I hope it can be based on real principles and on factual knowledge about the nature of space, which unites objective knowledge with profound human feeling."

There was certainly a need for such a school. It is difficult for outsiders to understand quite how doctrinaire and remote many conventional schools of architecture were — and are. Most teachers and staff still think in terms of the architectural debates of the 1960s and worship Le Corbusier with undiminished devotion. At the same time, the role models for students tend to be those practitioners of "High Tech" design who enjoy international superstar status and acquire knighthoods and even peerages. Students who take a practical interest in the past and who perhaps aspire to designing modern Classical buildings are likely to have a hard time.

In contrast, the Prince hoped that students in his school would "appreciate that there are certain timeless values which we can learn from the past and apply to the future. I would like the students to learn that in order to be able to design with sensitivity and an appropriate sense of



Prince Charles presents his vision at the V&A in 1989



The Prince talks architecture in his television special

reverence for the natural surroundings, they first need to learn humility and how to submerge the inevitable ego-centric tendencies that we all experience."

The Institute, therefore, had something positive to offer, and in any sphere of life it is surely healthy for there to be an alternative way of thinking and doing.

However, such is the bitter hatred for the Prince of Wales in the old architectural establishment that few were prepared to see any merit in this venture. The Institute was dismissed as a sort of finishing school run by reactionaries

and Classicists and full of students studying the Classical Orders so that they could become like Quinlan Terry, the tweedy conservative architect who has a nice line in designing new Georgian mansions for the very rich.

This was never the case. There certainly were Classicists on the staff, but what was impressive about the Institute's basic foundation course was an openness to several approaches to the making of architecture — Classical, Arts and Crafts, or whatever — and an interest in different attitudes and cultures, combined with a strong emphasis on practical matters such as drawing, modelling and building.

What I do know is that the students who came on from the Institute to the Mackintosh School of Architecture in Glasgow, where I teach history, were conspicuously good. Perhaps they would have flourished in any school, but they had a confidence and independence and breadth of outlook that were valuable and refreshing.

One of these students had gone to the Institute not knowing whether he wanted to be an architect or a sculptor — a positive confusion — and had been attracted by the objectives of the foundation course, particularly the emphasis on philosophy.

He was not disappointed. Although he found much of the teaching "quite ideological", with modernism presented as an "evil" (rather than as the only way to salvation, as in most conventional schools), he was impressed by the wide variety of approaches on offer.

There was the pure gospel of Classicism preached by born-again disciples such as Julian Bicknell, but there was also an interest in an "organic" architecture inspired by the weird anthropomorphic timber buildings of Louis J. M. Perret, architect of the dragon-like Hungarian Pavilion at the Seville Expo. Then there was the group therapy offered by the Californian guru Christopher Alexander, and the insights into Oriental mysticism and sacred geometry taught by Keith Critchlow, as well as the earthy, practical application of Arts and Crafts philosophy demonstrated by solid practitioners such as Dick Reid, the sculptor and carver.

That was at the beginning, however, and this spirit has been undermined by conflict between the several factions in the school and by cruel politics at management level. In its six years, the Institute has had



Prince Charles saw architectural splendours during his tour of St Petersburg in 1994



The magazine has been closed

Morale of students and staff has been sapped and it is difficult now to see how it can be revived'

four directors, which is surely too many to inspire confidence. Indeed, there have been so many changes of director and of direction that the morale of students and staff has been sapped and it is difficult to see how it can be revived.

The plush premises next to Regent's Park certainly created an aura of extravagance which the recent interest of the Charity Commissioners suggest is not illusory. Last year the original board of governors, chaired by Lord Morris of Castle Morris, was summarily dismissed and replaced by one dominated by lawyers and with no architects. It is this board that recently closed the graduate school and killed off Perspectives despite the ostensible commitment of the Prince.

And for this the individual who gave his royal name to the school must surely be held responsible. Certainly the Institute could never have been established without his encouragement and his ability to raise millions from the likes of the Sultan of Brunei, but he has failed to nurture his creation. Instead — like many of great wealth who are

from reality — he seems all too ready to act on the advice of the last person he has talked to.

It would seem to be the nature of royalty to attract sycophants and careerists, and the pity is that the Prince of Wales has not listened to those who have the Institute's best interests at heart, for it really is — or was — doing something valuable.

Alan Powers, the Institute's librarian and the architectural correspondent of *The Spectator*, remains convinced that it offers what no other school can provide, but he sometimes despairs of attitudes both within and without. Inside the Institute, the Classicists have been narrow and bigoted, adamantly refusing to accept that there may be several roads to architectural salvation, while the blinkered hostility of the architectural establishment and the RIBA has only confirmed his worst fears.

"What the world won't understand," Powers says, "is that what the Institute is about is close to modernism — to me, the good modernism." That is, a modern architecture concerned with social purpose and good building. But, Powers says, the positive nature of the whole project has only really been aired in Perspectives — and that admirable publication has now been killed off.

After an uncertain start, Perspectives evolved into a magazine of broad, non-partisan scope which took an

intelligent interest in all schools of current architecture. "Architecture is not a subject just for the specialist, the practitioner or the intellectual," preached an article in the first issue under the by-line of the Prince. "It is a subject for people, for all of us, because it is a subject which forms our lives, creates our environment and expresses our deepest feelings about the world in which we live. That is why I feel so strongly about the subject matter of this new magazine."

It seems to me that Perspectives fully lived up to those high hopes. Yet the Prince — whose three white feathers appeared on its cover — seems to have acquiesced in its sad demise.

It has, however, been suggested that the Prince did not really care for the catholic policy pursued by Giles Worsley, the editor, for there can be no doubt that HRH knows what he likes, or dislikes. Indeed, the Prince of Wales's architectural judgments have always been suspect. The truth is that he said nothing novel or unusual to his Hampton Court speech. The orthodoxies of the Modern Movement in architecture — high-rise, pre-fabricated, reinforced concrete housing and the rest — had been under attack for the previous decade, and it might be argued that the Prince simply made matters worse by driving all the old modernists into an entrenched and resentful position.

For that is what matters, Poundbury, the residential development near Dorchester masterminded by Leon Krier — one of the really serious architectural minds of our time — was meant to demonstrate the validity of traditional principles.

Yet the Prince has failed to stop the scheme being compromised, provoking its creator to retreat to the South of France in disgust.

Indeed, the casualty list resulting from the Prince's involvement in architecture — whether from his vacillation and lack of support or from simply being blinded by the royal presence — is now long. Politics within the Institute has always been vicious, even by the standards of academics. And now the Prince of Wales's court seems to want to distance him from areas of controversy, and that means architecture.

After all, Lady Browne-Wilkinson, the new chairwoman of the governors under whose leadership so many have resigned, is the lawyer who handled Camilla Parker Bowles's divorce. So the Prince of Wales's Institute for Architecture seems likely to fall victim to the changed circumstances created by the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

What is sad is that the worthy — and important — aims of the Institute have been tarnished by all this frivolity; perhaps it would have been better if the Prince had never set it up if he was not prepared to see things through. Watching from a safe distance has given me an acute understanding of what, say, the court of Louis XV must have been like. It is almost enough to make one a republican.



The Prince meets architecture with a human face



The Institute's plush premises next to Regent's Park

Perhaps the "monstrous carbuncle" given about the chosen design for the National Gallery extension was appropriate, for it was a poor design and a bad scheme. But other public pronouncements seem little more than soundbites. To describe the new British Library, a deeply serious response to a civilised brief, as an "academy for training secret police" was cheap and frivolous.

What does the Prince of Wales actually like? New projects on his Duchy of Cornwall Estate in Kennington suggest that he goes for that easy-looking "Classicism" with lots of columns and pediments, associated with Quinlan Terry. There is no evidence that he can distinguish between good and bad traditional but, any more than between imaginative and pedestrian modern architecture.

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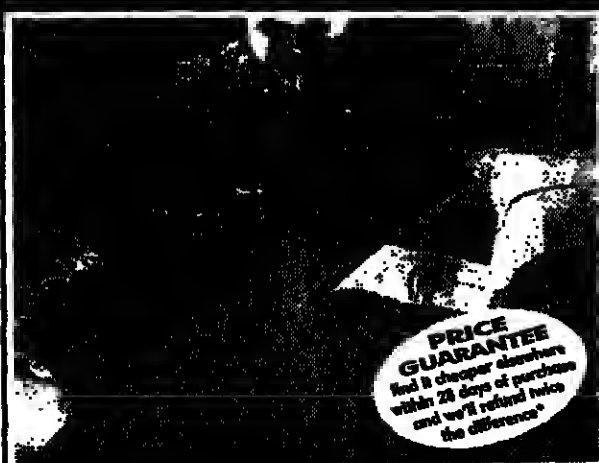
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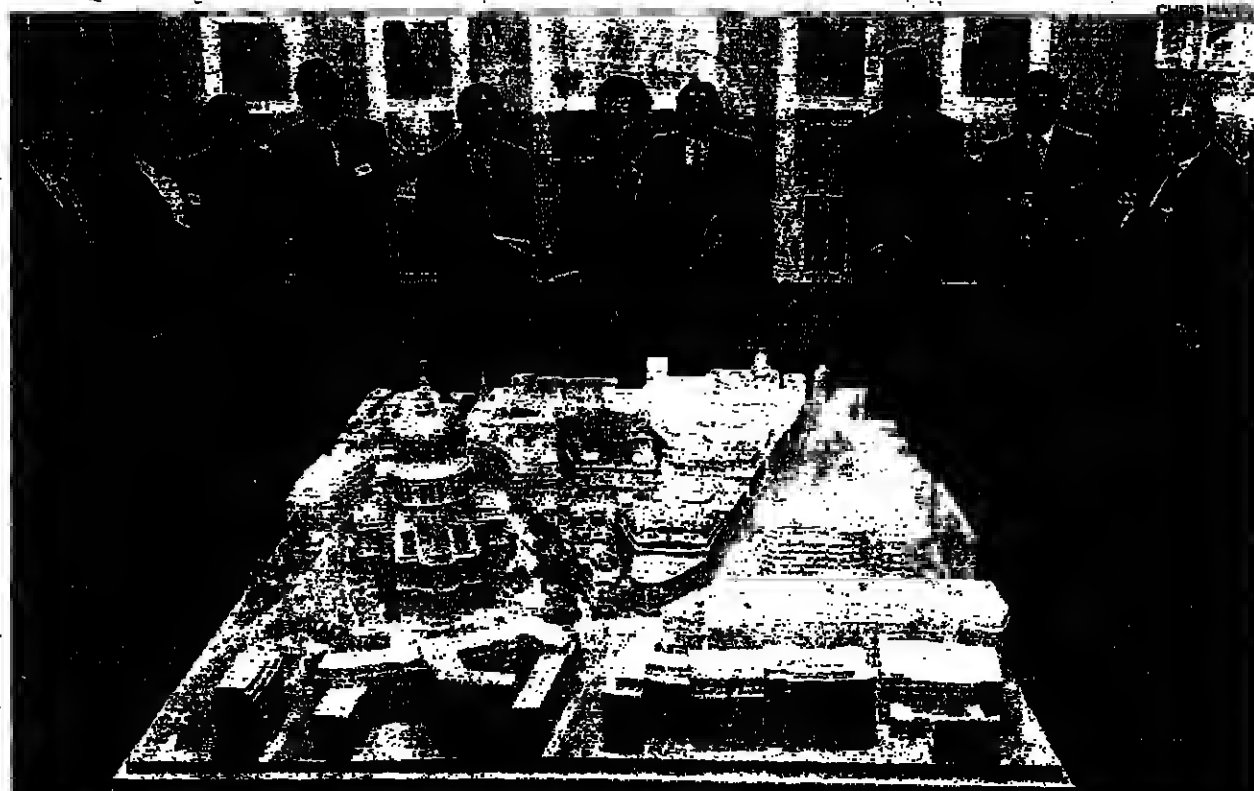
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Redevelopment of London's Paternoster Square worried the Prince, who feared it would blight St Paul's Cathedral

مكتبة الامم المتحدة

Joanna Pitman talks to Jack Cunningham, the feisty Agriculture Minister who is no friend to the farmers



Jack Cunningham, the much-criticised Agriculture Minister. "I grew up living next to a farm and I used to work there in the summer holidays. I walk, I fish and I have farming friends — even beef farmers. I'm a rural man at heart"

There's not much mud on his wellies

Jack Cunningham, Agriculture Minister, farmers' foe, son of a Labour trade union leader and product of a rugged, proletarian upbringing steeped in the old Labour movement, is in full flow, dredging up his best muddy credentials. "I was brought up in the countryside. I grew up living next to a farm and I used to work on the farm in the summer holidays — for free — because I liked it. I like being out with the harvest... I walk, I fish and I have farming friends — even beef farmers, you know. I'm a rural man at heart."

The son of the soil's reminiscences sound a little awkward. The trouble is that sincerity in politics is like sincerity in acting — you've got to know how to fake it. And Cunningham just looks and sounds a bit too metropolitan for this kind of manure-on-welly talk. He has only just recovered from a role as shadow spokesman for National Heritage, in a thespian cloak, trying to convince the public of his luvvy credentials and his sincere appreciation of opera, ballet and fine art.

What he really looks like is a career politician. It's 28 years since, at the age of 30, he won the Labour Whitehaven seat (it has been known as Copeland since 1983), a 400-square-mile constituency in west and south Cumbria comprising remote farming communities, part of the Lake District national park and the Sellafield nuclear plant. Cunningham has held the seat ever since.

Today he wears an immaculate white starched shirt with "JAC" on the breast pocket (white thread on white for extra exclusivity). He has a couture silk tie and is possibly the last man in Britain to wear a snakeskin belt. The swept-back hair and the slight impression of fake tan gives him a certain air of Ibiza-on-Thames. There is also a sense that he is entirely comfortable with Chris Smith's reported comment that he is one of the two most handsome members of the Cabinet (Tony Blair, of course, being the other).

Cunningham stayed away from the Countryside March last Sunday, because he says it was organised for people interested in hunting and hounds. A fear of televised indignities and being jostled by farmers was probably his real reason. And, if so, his instincts were sound. Marchers of all sorts, the knights of the shires, the factory farmers, agricultural workers, even a hardy little band of Welsh falconers, were on the lookout for him. "He's made a stupid cock-up with the beef," said Alan Forbes, a beef and lamb farmer from west Wales. "He's

kicked farmers in the teeth. My income is down 40 per cent. And associated industries are suffering, too, because farmers aren't able to invest."

"He's an ignorant pig and he won't listen to our point of view," said Clifford Milton, from north Devon. "He's slammed a ban on beef on the bone and now there must be more farmers committing suicide than there are deaths from CJD. I was brought up on beef and full-cream milk. They should leave us alone."

Have we returned to the days when, like the late 1980s, it was deemed proper for the Government to shove its noses into the dietary and other habits of perfect strangers? Today we are told to stop smoking, stop hunting, curtail our enjoyment of beef, cut down on fatty foods, drink less when driving

Not at all. I don't feel like a scapegoat... and that T-bone steak gang... ugh. You get the feeling that he is not amused by nambypamby chefs bemoaning the end of pungent beef bouillon, and the T-bone steak and extra-eating classes.

"You wouldn't see many people from my constituency queuing up on a Friday for their T-bone steaks. They couldn't afford it. No, the Government's policy is to eliminate risk, to ensure that BSE-infected material does not get into the food chain. And we will continue to ban parts of the carcass that are identified as risky: the head, the spleen, the thymus... it will go on as long as the risk is there and there may be less and less of the carcass that we consider safe for the public to eat."

Cunningham had been sailing along just fine in his new ministerial post until he imposed that unfortunate beef-on-the-bone ban last November. The suggestion is still widespread in political circles that he made the decision himself without consulting Blair, having heard the views of scientific experts. But he denies this, saying the decision was thoroughly considered

over several months. "In banning beef on the bone we were signalling to Europe that we were being tough. We were saying: let us export our beef. It's safe now."

However, despite the safety measures, the ban on British and Northern Irish beef still holds across the European Union. "I expect we will be taking a decision on that next month."

For all the beefy bravado, Cunningham clearly is concerned about the perceived stink hanging over his ministry. Last week he announced that £35 million required to introduce a cattle tracing system and £35 million to implement new controls at abattoirs would now be found by the Treasury rather than extracted from farmers' pockets. This policy U-turn seemed to owe less to any new-found desire to be nice to country folk and rather more to political prudence in the face of 250,000 angry people marching through the capital's streets.

Agriculture has recently been both a high-profile position and an ugly job, but Cunningham, never guilty of hiding his light under a bushel, has embraced it wholeheartedly. He has sent teams of ministry people marching out into the country to talk to farmers, postmen, teachers and others. And he has subjected himself to regular torture, addressing farmers' conferences and warning them of his intention to support the reduction of farming subsidies.

"I have been sent to take these people on," he said when he took up the job. Today he says he is "enjoying every minute of it".

Brute force and bloody-mindedness are part of his arsenal, and the farmers' angry jeers evidently slip easily off a tough skin. His masochistic efforts are paying off. Blair has been heard to single him out as one of the top three performing ministers in the Cabinet, and he is considered a possible replacement for Mo Mowlam as Northern Ireland secretary, which would signal a real promotion.

However, Cunningham is 58 and knows his political future is limited. He has had a long and unique career with many ups and downs (he is one of Labour's longest-serving MPs). When Jim Callaghan became Prime Minister in 1976, six years after Cunningham first won his seat, he was appointed a parliamentary undersecretary. When

Labour lost power in 1979, he failed to shine in a series of shadow posts, but spent the 1980s boosting his bank account with a number of lucrative corporate consultancies. In May last year, Blair considered Cunningham's rare ministerial experience invaluable for his new Cabinet.

Cunningham is not a character in the sense of being flamboyant, eccentric or a crank. He has become a parliamentary character by skill, persistence, the careful gathering of cronies and by dint of his long service. But while the perceived personalities of Peter Mandelson and Alastair Campbell tell us much about the spirit of the Blair age, Cunningham does not quite fit in. He was born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne and lived in the tied cottage of a grandfather who worked down the mines. His Catholic father was a trade union leader and his Methodist mother was a housewife. The young Cunningham was well fed but nothing fancy, were taught to keep their nails clean and were introduced into the Church of England.

Cunningham went to Jarrow Grammar School and got a place at Durham University to read chemistry. He grew up in an era when young men Brylcreemed their hair and the excitement of the week was going to the pictures on a Saturday night. He met his wife, Maureen, at a church dance when he was 16 and "got together with her" two years later. They have three children: Catherine, 28, Alexandra, 26, and Jonathan, 24.

Cunningham may have effortlessly acquired a suave, urbane knowingness, and his manner and speech have lost most traces of his origins. But he has never been clubbable, he is not the sort to bother buttering people up. He is more the brutish, semi-house-trained old Labour heavy with a rough tongue. He can also be arrogant. At a recent Commons debate on the beef-on-the-bone ban, he stayed away and fielded his deputy, Jeff Rooker, instead, but he was spotted in the Commons' smoking room. Perhaps he wanted to show contempt for the Tories, but this was not considered a clever move.

Most farmers understand that subsidies are going to be cut, whether it is Cunningham in charge or someone else. But they want the cuts to be made with an understanding of the practicalities of rural life. Subsidy busting done with arrogance in his city gent's suit is not likely to make Jack "Boots" Cunningham the farmers' friend. But then again, I don't suppose he minds that too much.



A country boy: Jack

IN HIS OWN WORDS

- "The idea that there is a cheque sitting in Brussels that I can bring back to British farmers cost-free is simply not the case" *December 1997*
- "There is over-supply of beef throughout Europe, and a long-term decline in consumption of beef everywhere. The Government is convinced of the need for substantial restructuring of the industry" *December 1997*
- "It [the CAP] infuriates farmers. It angers environmentalists and it upsets consumers. You have got to be pretty stupid to go on spending that much money every year, and ending up infuriating everyone and pleasing no one" *January 1998*
- "I understand that you [farmers] would like more money. So would many other sectors of the British economy. So would the health service. So would teachers" *February 1998*

MOTHERS, LOVERS & OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

JOANNA TROLLOPE

OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN

The stunning new novel by JOANNA TROLLOPE

'Compulsively readable'
Sunday Express

OUT NOW

Shipshape for model customer

Michael Cable meets
Royal Opera baritone
Thomas Allen at a
frequent port of call

Opera lovers who happen to catch sight of baritone Thomas Allen rummaging through a rubbish skip in the street need not be concerned. The Royal Opera star has not fallen on desperate times: he has merely started on a new model boat project.

Although he gets most of his materials for his models from Maritime Models of Greenwich — just a belying rope's throw from the *Cutty Sark* — many of his non-kit models, such as the miniature 1:250 scale replica of the northeast collier *Vane Tempest* that is his special pride and joy, are made almost entirely from odds and ends. This takes a great deal of imaginative improvisation — which is where the contents of rubbish skips can come in handy.

"If you know what you're looking for, you can find all kinds of useful bits and pieces," he says, adding "It's not the sort of thing Pavarotti would do and I suppose it could be a bit embarrassing if somebody recognised me. My wife gets very concerned and tells me I must stop doing it."

A single hair from Mrs Allen's head forms the deck rail along one side of the *Vane Tempest*, and one from his step-daughter's head along the other. The hull was fashioned from a piece of scrapwood salvaged from a skip and the ventilators were formed by cutting the ends from pill capsules. The tiny oars in the lifeboats were carved from toothpicks.

Attention to detail is much admired at Maritime Models; shop assistant David Sambrook is an international judge for model-making competitions. "The research that goes into making a model is very much part of the pleasure," says 53-year-old Mr Allen, who buys books and plans from Maritime Models.

"You can learn a lot in the process. The *Vane Tempest*, for example, belonged to the Londonderrys, who owned a lot of the coalfields in Durham, around where I was brought up. She was one of the colliers that plied between the old coal port of Seaham, which was my home town, and London. She would come up the Thames as far as Battersea, which is why her funnel and masts had to be designed so that they could be lowered."

Mr Allen traces his interest in ships and boats back to the days when his father, who worked in the credit department of a Sunderland department store, would take him for walks up to a high vantage point in the town to look down on the Wear which, back then in the early Fifties, was still swarming with ships.

Tugboats, fishing boats, ships on pontoons, ships in dry docks and ships on the stocks waiting to be launched — it was a wonderful sight," he recalls, adding "My grandfather worked in the shipyards and two other members of my family are marine engineers, so I feel that ships and the sea are very much in the blood."

Model-making came easily to him; he has always been good with his hands. His first ambition was to be an eye surgeon. "I certainly didn't grow up always wanting to be an opera singer," he



David Sambrook of Maritime Models inspects a scaled-down HMS Bluebell made by opera singer Thomas Allen. "Ships and the sea are in my blood," he says

my favourite shop

Even when he started singing in the church and school choirs and it became clear that he was blessed with an exceptional voice, it wasn't seen as an obvious career path. "There was no precedent where I came from," he explains. "Luckily, my physics master was also a professional singer and he gave me a lot of advice and encouragement, and I ended up winning a place at the Royal College of Music."

Renowned especially for his Don Giovanni, a role he has made his own since he first sang it at Glyndebourne 21 years ago, he has gone on to establish himself as one of the world's most sought-after singers, but remains refreshingly untemperamental. "Most singers are very practical, down-to-earth people," he insists. "The idea of the pampered prima donna is the stuff of old Viennese films and the myth of Maria Callas and Caruso."

He doesn't envy the attention-grabbing

tenors their monopoly of the spotlight. "I'd rather be a dour, stable baritone than a flighty tenor, having to worry about those high notes every night of the week," he grins.

However, he does get irritated by the idea that opera is elitist. "There is no reason why everyone should not be able to enjoy and appreciate it," he says. "It is too expensive, but that's because it is not properly funded."

Although he is booked up all summer with engagements around the world, and is currently rehearsing *Cost Fan Tutte* for the Royal Opera, which opens on March 17, he would like to move into straight acting. "It's a desire that won't go away," he says. "I'm talking to various people."

In the meantime, though, I've seen a tugboat here today that I think might be next on my model shipway."

● Maritime Models, 7 Nelson Road, Greenwich, London SE10 9JB (0181-858 5661). Open Mon to Sat 9.30am-6pm.

● Readers are offered two tickets for the price of one to see Thomas Allen in *Cost Fan Tutte*; for details, see page 21

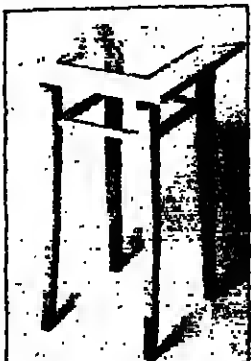
SHOP WATCH

■ Joseph's latest store opens in King's Street, Manchester, this month. Housed in a Grade II listed building, with a sleek limestone floor, it promises the familiar cool Joseph ambience and the full complement of spring 1998 clothes. For details telephone 0171-590 6200.

■ Planet Organic is a supermarket with the works, from free-range meat to vitamins and organic beer, plus a juice bar for that essential wheatgrass pick-me-up. Call for same-day central London home delivery (0171-221 7171).

■ Muji, the Japanese no-label chain, now has pure cosmetics to match its pure designs. Face Water and Face Milk are £2.95, and lotions, soaps and shampoos smell of mandarin or citrus. Find Muji's biggest store at 157 Oxford Street, W1 (0171-323 2288).

■ Touch Design's mail-order catalogue is full of hand-made homewares.



Touch Design table

For a catalogue call 01725 552888 or visit the shop at 51 High Street, b Penny Handley, Salisbury, Wiltshire.

■ Borough Market, home to southeast London's fruit and veg wholesale market, is set to expand into quality food retailing. Neal's Yard Dairy is already there, with a brilliant selection of cheeses from the British Isles, at 6 Park Street, London SE1 (0171-403 9544 or 0171-407 1800 for mail order).

■ UPDATE: Liberty's brilliant, bold floral fabrics have a blonde-wood showroom of their own. Find it in the basement of the Osborne & Little shop, 304 King's Road, SW3 (0171-352 1456). Follow the fashion cognoscenti in APC. French designer Jean Toutou's new shop at 40 Ledbury Road, W1 (0171-229 4933).

JUDITH WILSON



Based in Greenwich, the store is close to the dry dock where the Cutty Sark is kept

GADGETS

THE WORST thing about mobile telephones is that they ring. Unless you are a born extrovert, it can be a cringe-making moment when you are in public. Due out at the end of this month is the first of a new range of essential accessories that could put an end to such untimely embarrassments. This is a small light powered by a tiny battery that flashes whenever a call is made to a mobile phone in its vicinity.

Available initially as a small key-fob made of clear blue plastic, the phone light will also



Mobile phone key-ring

appear on the top of pens later in the year. Armed with one of these lights, you can leave the ringer off your mobile, or leave your mobile in your bag, without fear of missing that important call. Of course, you have to keep half an eye on the light instead, but it is easy enough to spot when it does go off.

The next generation of the gadget could be even smarter — small vibrating key-fobs that can be slipped into a pocket.

TIM WAPSHOTT

● Mobile Phone Key-ring, £9.95, available shortly from The Gadgets Shop (01482 860860).

It's time to get stuffed

CUSHIONS

Far from merely offering protection from cold seats, cushions have become a soft-sell interior-design tool. "Buying cushions is like buying a new lipstick," says Caroline Burstein Collis, a director from the designer clothes shop Browns. "They can create a whole new look without the need for a full facelift."

In her latest venture, a new homewares section called Browns Living, she stocks luxury cushions for discerning shoppers who don't mind spending that little bit extra for style.

Self-confessed comfort junkie Donna Karan admits that her penchant for cushions has helped to give her home the functional and nurturing feeling she loves. "Cashmere cushions are my favourite," she says.

"They ooze sensuality and are so comfortable to lie on."

Journalist A.A. Gill spends many of his working hours on his fuchsia pink velvet sofa at home, surrounded by four

Chairman Mao cushions (see below). "If you leave them long enough it's like sitting in a gurning competition," he muses. "The feathers settle and the faces wrinkle into frowns and scowls."

For those who are interested in keeping the right energy flowing through their home, Lama Arto, managing director of the Feng Shui Association, advises going for vibrant cushion colours. "Bland tones of white, cream, dark mahogany and black can create a stagnant atmosphere," he says.

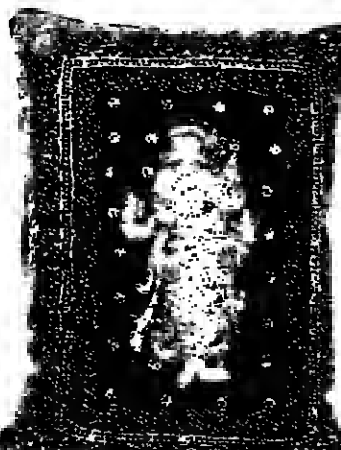
Mark Winstanley, head of home furnishings design at Laura Ashley, is predicting heather and sky blue hues for bedroom cushions this summer, followed by indigo blue next winter.

MARY ANN PERCY



ABOVE: From Mexico, the "Jesus and Mary" 40cm x 52cm brushed-cotton cushions, £28 each, are the latest in designer kitsch. Both designs are striking in red, blue and yellow from World (0171-379 5588)

RIGHT: Radiant in orange velvet, the 70cm x 70cm "Lotus cushion", £70, is a luxuriously soft number to meditate on. From Tamar Zaig (0171-221 0100)



LEFT: The buckwheat filling inside these Indian silk cushions, 25cm x 35cm or 30cm x 40cm, from Dore, is said to aid restful sleep, as each feels like a mini-beating for your head. The cushions, £95, come in marine, red, lime and aqua, from Browns Living (0171-491 7833)



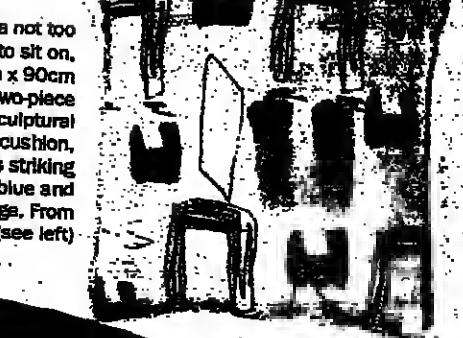
RIGHT: For £28, you can sit on Chairman Mao's face. The 40cm x 50cm "Mao" cushion is black and white with a velvet backing from World (see above)



LEFT: Filled with lavender, this 30cm x 10cm black satin head rest, £70, a deluxe travelling accessory from Donna Karan (0171-495 3100), comes in a drawstring bag with aromatherapy candles



LEFT: A unique sound-wave laser (similar to that used for ultrasounds at a hospital) has been adapted by Janet Stoyel (0171-401 2570) to pattern her polyester cushions. Available in gold, silver and bronze, the cushions start at £30 each for a 30cm x 30cm version, and rise to £50 for 41cm x 41cm



LEFT: It's not too comfortable to sit on, but this 60cm x 90cm two-piece sculptural cushion, £85, is striking to look at in blue and orange. From Tamar Zaig (see left)

ABOVE: The "Space XV" 38cm x 38cm silver Lycra cushion, designed by Claire O'Shea, is available for £45 from David Champion (0171-727 6016). For private commissions, call 0171-221 0100

ABOVE: The "Energising" cushion set, £63, consists of three white spun organza cushions, each 15cm x 20cm and filled with an aromatic herb — rosemary, peppermint or white sage. From Donna Karan (see left)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DES JENSON

صكا من الامل



THREE OF A KIND

Watches to suit every style of outdoor clothing—in every kind of weather. LG



Orange leather strap Hydro Compass watch, £32.50. Swatch, department stores nationwide (0171-836 7868)



Black Velcro-fastening Eclipse watch, £50. Fossil, Debenhams, (01908 548600)



Burgundy and blue fabric-strap watch, £39.99. G. Shock, 55 Neal Street, WC2 (0171-497 0534; mail order 0800 387146)

Game plans



LEFT: Blue striped knit dress, £105.50, Strenesse, Selfridges, W1, and selected stores nationwide (0171-923 3799). Blue zip-up fleece hood top, £35, Warehouse, see right

BELOW: Blue nylon shiny jacket, £119.99, Diesel, Blue floral embroidered skirt, £39.99, Kookai, W1 (0171-937 4411). Blue leather shoes, £45, Ravel, Oxford Street, W1, and branches nationwide (0171-436 3126)



London Fashion Week may have proved that British designers are the masters of street style, but American design is fit and fighting back. Sportswear, long the favoured apparel of every American, has gone from the baseball stadium to the high street, with mainstream US designers such as Calvin Klein, Donna Karan and Ralph Lauren leading the field with their collections of fashionable fleeces, tracksuit pants and trainers.

American sportswear influence have been with us since the Fifties, when jeans, pleated skirts and baseball jackets were the height of cool. This time, though, it is not a single item but a whole look we are appropriating. Entire sportswear ranges are now being integrated into mainstream collections.

According to Archie Fernandez, sales director of Björn Borg, the influence of the sports industry on designer collections has been phenomenal, resulting in his company having "both casualwear and clubwear collections with an 'active' influence".

Although the collections use the traditional colours and styles of the sports field—grey, red, black and white, with trademark stripes and zip-fronted jackets—the new spring look is also soft, feminine and comfortable.

Paramount on the spring/summer catwalks is luxury. In New York, Calvin Klein showed tracksuit pants and zip-fronted hooded jackets in pale silk; Bill Blass a white silk crepe tennis dress; Vivienne Tam loose linen drawstring "sweatpants" with heavily beaded spaghetti-strap tops.

Wearing the full strip is not essential. The idea is to mix basic fashion items with sportswear—drawstring pants with sequinned tops; little lace skirts with fine silk sweatshirts; naval-inspired dresses with spiky heels. The goal is not looking like a team player, but joining in the young and relaxed spirit of the this spring's fashion game.

LISA GRAINGER

ABOVE: Red knit tank-top, £49.99; red knit cardigan, £69.99, Diesel, 43 Earlham Street, WC1 (0171-833 2255). Khaki linen mix drawstring trousers, £99.95, Planet, major department stores (0181-800 8022)

ABOVE LEFT: Suedette charcoal drawstring top, £125, Joseph, 26 Sloane Street, SW1 (0171-590 8200). Khaki shorts, £25, Warehouse, 86 King's Road, SW3 (0171-278 3491). Snake-skin sandals, £145, Russell & Bromley, 24-25 New Bond Street, W1 (0171-629 6903)

LEFT: Grey fleece top, £39.99, Next, branches nationwide (0116-284 9424). Grey crepe skirt with lace trim, £40, French Connection, branches nationwide (0171-399 7200)

Hair and make-up by Sally Kvathelm for Jo Hanford (0171-495 7774). Styling by Amandip Uppel. Model: Rebecca



Höfel's HIGH STRENGTH GINGER



Höfel's High Strength Ginger can warm both you and your other half, which is fortunate, because at this time of year many people need warming. Carefully formulated by Seven Seas, Höfel's High Strength Ginger is a convenient, one-a-day herbal preparation that's easy to take all year round. So whenever you need a little warmth, why not try Höfel's High Strength Ginger?

Höfel's Herbal Supplements SEVEN SEAS Health Care

Richard Owen meets the maestro of the art of traditional pizza-making



Pino Arlacchi, the "champion of pizza chefs", disputes the widely-held view that pizza is a Neapolitan dish from the 18th century, and suggests it has ancient Arab origins

Throw dough the Neapolitan way

Is Italian pizza in crisis, unteachable, going down the pan? Not according to Pino Arlacchi, the owner of one of Rome's most successful pizzerias, close to the illuminated fountains of the Piazza del Popolo. Every evening the narrow pavement outside Pizza Re ("King Pizza"), his modern, brightly lit restaurant, is packed with pizza lovers vying for a table, and he even has to provide a hissing gas heater to keep the crowds warm on winter nights.

Only established three years ago, Pizza Re is a firm favourite with the young and fashionable. "The secret lies in the ingredients," Moffa says, waving his arms about exuberantly. "Pizza was invented in Naples. I am from Naples, and our pizzas are 100 per cent Neapolitan."

But the Italian food authorities are sufficiently alarmed by the decline of the pizza — the very essence of Italy, according to Britain's EU presidency logo, which, controversially, uses a pizza as the Italian symbol — to lay down new standards for pizza chefs to follow. There are 20,000 pizzerias in Italy — and that's not counting the bakers who sell pizza by the slice as street food. A million pizzas are consumed every day.

But, as many tourists know to their cost, not everything sold as pizza is worthy of the name. You don't find anything quite as bizarre as the concoctions which pass for pizza in London or New York. "Deep pan" is an unknown concept in the land of the pizza's birth, miserably, as are many of the more exotic toppings. But there are plenty of soggy, greasy or thinly topped Italian examples to give pizza a bad name.

To the delight of native Neapolitans, the National Standards Institute, known by its initials as UNI, has plumped for genuine Neapolitan-style pizza in its efforts to guarantee quality.

"We are going to award certificates the way we do for wine," a UNI official explained. Pizzerias which pass the Naples test will be declared worthy of a "DOC" certificate (the initials stand for "Di Origine Controllata"). Pizzaioli (pizza chefs) who hope to qualify may no longer use just any old tomatoes, cheese, or olive oil.

The tomatoes must be plum ones,

in 8mm dice. "Round tomatoes" are allowed only on the simplest of pizzas, the Margherita, named after Queen Margherita (1851-1926, wife of King Umberto of Savoy) and topped with tomato, cheese and basil (the "red, white and green" of the Italian flag). The cheese must be mozzarella made from buffalo milk (a tall order, given the declining number of buffalo in Italy), the olive oil must be "extra virgin", and the only salt permitted is sea salt.

Rolling pins are banned: the pastry must be tossed by hand, and the dish must be cooked in a wood-fired oven (forno a legna) at a temperature of between 420 and 480 degrees.

At his family pizzeria in the tough working-class neighbourhood of Magliana, I found Pino Arlacchi, the "champion of pizza chefs", distinctly sceptical about standards, DOC certificates and bureaucracy in general. He suspects a "Naples plot" is behind it all.

Arlacchi, a wiry and tireless 31-year-old, teaches at the pizza school in the fashionable Rome suburb of Parioli, where the course lasts three weeks. He also has to cater to the discerning housewives and burly builders and mechanics who crowd into his pizzeria for lunch, and whose culinary standards are high indeed.

They appreciate his astonishing skill in tossing enormous amounts of pizza dough in the air, twirling the discs of consistency of charnois leather — over his head and under his knees before slapping them back on to the stainless-steel worktop in a cloud of flour.

In his kitchen he proudly displays his silver "pizza championship" cups, awarded by the Lazio region. But he is unrepentant about his new electric oven, which can take six long trays at a time. "We are open dawn to midnight," he explains.

He agrees with the UNI regulations on the use of sea salt and extra virgin oil. "But you have to bear in mind, Roman pizzas are thinner than Neapolitan ones. They are less bread, they weigh only 120 grams to a Neapolitan 250 grams."

Arlacchi also challenges the assumption — paraded as fact on the back of the glossy Pizza Re menu —

that pizza originated in Naples in the 18th century.

"I think it goes back much earlier than that," he says. "Pizza is one of man's earliest dishes, related to flat Arab breads cooked on hot stones in the sun." And many Italian pizzerias are run by Arab immigrants.

For Arlacchi, who learnt the pizza trade at 18 from his mother, Maria Teresa (who still works in the shop), the secret lies not in the UNI recipe but in the dough, which in his case is "one part water to one part flour". The traditional pizza dough is made of one part water to two parts flour, and is much heavier.

"I use North American flour, with added soya, tap water at room temperature, fresh yeast, plus salt and oil," Arlacchi says. He makes 38 kg of dough a day, and keeps it in the fridge for 48 hours to "prove". He cooks it at 380 degrees, below the UNI recommended level. "It's more digestible," he says.

One of London's top Italian chefs, Giorgio Locatelli, says that the best pizza recipe is usually the simplest one. "We are talking about the Italian pizza, not the English one eaten in front of the television."

Though unimpressed by the idea of a DOC for pizza — "it's like having a DOC for a sandwich: impossible" — Locatelli is religious not only about his pizza recipes but also about the ovens they are cooked in. For his Soho restaurant Spiga, which opens next week, he brought over a specialist oven builder from Italy. In turn, the builder brought Italian water with him for the cement mix.

Like the Arlacchi family, he agrees with the Standards Institute that "good pizza is getting harder to find in Rome". Those who want to taste it can try Arlacchi's prize-winning specialities, such as his asparagus, salami and mozzarella pizza, or his mashed pumpkin, bacon and mozzarella pizza garnished with artichoke leaves; or Moffa's Capriciosa (ham, artichokes, mushrooms and olives) or Vesuvius (mozzarella, cream and peppers).

You can also try what the Pizza Re menu calls "rustic tart". This does not refer to the young women in tight miniskirts who haunt the approach roads to Naples, but to pizza rustica, a deliciously light confection of eggs and ham resembling quiche.



Signor Arlacchi shows how to throw dough the old-fashioned way

Drink



Jane MacQuitty

The 300-year-old Berry Bros has much to celebrate — and much it needs to improve upon

Anyone visiting the independent wine merchants Berry Bros & Rudd at 3 St James's Street, London SW1, will think they are entering a time warp. The varnished frontage, greened with age, the gilded lettering and Georgian windows all smack of Dickens' day and cannot have changed much since Widow Bourne set up her coffee shop there in 1698. Step inside and the sloping floor, dark oak-panelled walls, antique bottles and roll-top desks all confirm the impression of an emporium warped in time.

Yet appearances can be deceptive. Berry Bros is celebrating its 300th anniversary this year, and at long last has awoken from a deep slumber. Two of those roll-top desks contain computer terminals linked to the Internet, and the pin-striped-suited young men who man this double royal warrant-holders' shop deal in wine on their cordless phones.

For years, Berry Bros was losing more money than it made on wine. It was propped up by sales of Cutty Sark whisky, now raked ninth Scotch in the world.

However, in the nick of time for its tercentenary year, Berry Bros has been "resuscitated" — and by the unlikely agency of the airports operator BAA. It approached Berry's in 1994 with the proposition of opening a No 3 lookalike at Heathrow's Terminal 3. Initially, the workday wines that Berry's stocked failed to impress the jetset. So Berry's trialled some of its finest and rarest bottles, and was stunned when the likes of a magnum of 1900 Margaux went for £8,500.

Today "T3", in Berry's new-found 1990s parlance, stocks 80 first-growth vintages and turns over £3 million annually. "T4", or Berry's second Heathrow shop at Terminal 4, with a small wine bar, is on course to add a further £2 million this year.

A second blessing from Berry's fairy godmother arrived last year in the shape of the strongly based Sloane Avenue wine merchant Fields. Its wholesale trade to posh restaurants like The Ivy and Caprice, plus an important array of 60 wine producers' agencies, breathed an extra gust of life into Berry's.

As yet, Berry's fascia has not replaced Fields in Sloane Avenue, and Fields staff are unchanged. But Berry's, previously well-provided with personal and corporate customers, now has a useful wholesale arm, currently

pushing 20 different wines into Asda supermarkets.

Berry's has known for a long time that it had to smarten up its act if it was going to survive, and now it looks as if it will, thanks in part to brought-in management consultants, one of whom, Tony Easter, is now its managing director. He has been quick to home in on Berry's international customers and the marketing opportunities.

The best news for wine drinkers is that changes have also taken place in the manner and method that wine is bought. Gone is the family Politburo, and in its place are Masters of Wine Alun Griffiths, formerly of Harrods and Fortnum & Mason, and David Roberts. Mr Roberts is convinced that the thorough overhaul of Berry's own-label wines and frank discussions with their producers has resulted in improvements that are two-thirds of the way along the quality road they want to follow.

My own tasting showed that Berry's has more work still to be done than it supposes. True, I was thrilled with the quality of Chateau's 1995 St Joseph with its black-as-night violet, peppery Rhône spice (£8.95) and Anthony Barton's ripe cedar and cinnamon-stashed 1995 Médoc Anniversary Cuvée claret (£8.75), plus Falveley's Marmite and chocolate 1992 Nuits St Georges 1er Cru, Clos de la Maréchale domaine-bottled burgundy (£15.95), part of the anniversary selection.

The von Kesselstatt's gorgeous golden, petrolly 1989 Bernkasteler Lay Spätlese is a £9.80 Mosel delight, as is Domaine Calot's 1995 Murgon, a fine earthy, plummy and cinnamon-spiced beaujolais (£8.75).

But of the almost 40 Berry's wines I tasted on this occasion, not enough had the stand-alone star quality that a serious fine wine merchant selling serious quantities of fine wine should be able to muster. The Prince of Wales's Highgrove trio are not worth the £6.65-£8.75 asked for each, even if the profits go to a good cause, and Berry's 300th Anniversary Cuvée Champagne (£15.25) from Binet is a smoky, awkward blend that needs improving.

Must try still harder should perhaps be Berry's wine department motto.

NEXT WEEK: Irish whiskey

THE DRINKS THAT TIME FORGOT

Gin-and-It

"What's yer poison?" As if from a Terence Rattigan comedy of manners, would sound the reply: "Ooh, gin-and-it for me, darling." The all-but-forgotten pairing of London gin with Italian sweet vermouth was hugely popular with the ladies — always, it seemed, at 5 o'clock. You would meet up with them at the old Quaglinos, or the Café de Paris between the wars.

Where, when and why so completely "it" fell from grace is a mystery. The G&V remains a hardy perennial: gin-based cocktails are enjoying something of a revival. It is a sorry establishment that does not house a bottle of Martini Rosso and, at a push, a red Maraschino cherry to complete the ensemble, notably without ice. It sits half-way between forgotten and rediscovered, but it lacks the Hollywood "glamour" which seems essential for the full-blooded revival. You are unlikely to overhear Arnold Schwarzenegger ordering one at Planet Hollywood.

From its early Dutch origins, gin, the "mother's ruin", went through various stages of Hogarthian infamy before achieving respectability in polite society with the introduction of unsweetened, "dry" gin in the 1870s. Empire-builders mixed it with Indian "tonic" water, Royal Navy officers mixed it with Angostura bitters (to produce a "pink gin"). Women took it with enthusiasm and a drop of vermouth. This aromatised wine may be the block to future popularity.

The prevailing snobbery is for "pure",



uncomplicated and unsweetened ingredients. Until that trend passes, the cry for "gin-and-it" will be heard only in a dwindling number of golf clubs, and in old films on the telly.

KATE STRONACH

HENRY HARRIS'S CHEAT OF THE WEEK

THERE IS ONE phrase that sends a shiver down my spine when I visit someone's house for the first time and am offered a roast joint. "Would you carve, Henry?" A strategic withdrawal to the car is the first thing that springs to mind, but, sadly, I do possess some manners and have yet to refuse this honour.

Worry over the treasured family carving knife that is usually proffered is the reason I have such cowardly thoughts.

If it is of the bone-handled variety, with a machete-type blade, then I know I'm in trouble — you over know which is the sharper edge.

As interest in serious home cooking grows steadily, we are spending more on knives than we used to — yet we regularly ruin these very expensive objects because we don't know how to sharpen them correctly.

It is time to admit defeat with the steel that you have spent years trying to master and get the ideal device for the best cutting-edge: the Chantry knife sharpener.

This contains two small



steel surfaces in a spring-loaded mechanism which you drag the knife through; after a couple of drags, even the bluntest of knives will have a decent edge.

I have tried countless imitations of this device (it's been around for years), but this is the only one I would recommend. The one I have at home has been in use for more than ten years and still performs.

You will now be thinking about a couple of knives to enhance your collection. I only use four knives at home: a small serrated knife, a Japanese-style chopping knife

with a Granton edge, a long carving knife, also with a Granton, and a 20cm cook's knife.

The Granton edged-knife has deep grooves scored into each side of the blade. This gives an edge of varying degrees of thickness that makes carving and sharpening easier. It is also very good for preventing thin slices of fish from sticking to the blade and breaking up.

As always, it is worth investing in a good quality knife. I use Ed Wusthof of Solingen (01782 825835 for stockists).

Chantry knife sharpeners are available in department stores, kitchen shops and kitchen equipment mail-order companies.

Happy carving, and watch those fingers!

● Last week we mistakenly said that olives should be washed in an alcohol solution to remove bitterness. Alcohol should have read alkaline.

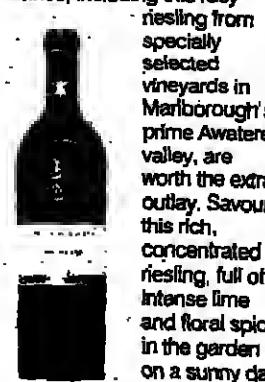
● Henry Harris is chef at Harvey Nichols Fifth Floor Restaurant in Knightsbridge, London.

STAR BUYS

1997 Montana Awatere Valley Vineyard Selection Riesling, Oddbins, £7.99

Blow the budget this week on gloriously verdant spring bottle from New Zealand.

Montana is the Kiwi's biggest wine producer and its new top-drawer range of reserve wines, including this racy



nestling from specially selected vineyards in Marlborough's prime Awatere valley, are worth the extra outlay. Savour this rich, concentrated riesling, full of intense lime and floral spice in the garden on a sunny day.

BEST OF THE REST

Other multi-buys that are worth snapping up at Victoria Wine include £3 off its good, ordinary Jacques Montauze Brut Champagne (£9.99) and two bottles of its respectable, luscious, grapey Castilla de Liria from Spain for £2.50 each (down 69p). And there's a straight £1 off its decent Marquis de la Tour Chardonnay fizz from the Loire (£3.99).

1995 Marquis de Beaulieu Bordeaux, Calvet, The Victoria Wine Company, £5.99, or two for £10 until March 30

Award yourself an early Easter present with this deliciously ripe, perfumed claret, whose first-division 1995 fruit delivers enticingly rich, fleshy



flavours and a long, firm, cedary finish. Discerning claret drinkers once gave a wide berth to Calvet. But of late I have been impressed by the quality of its wines, particularly their taste and value for money.

The Times Cook

The classic Belgian meal of mussels, frites and truffles with beer is now only a skip, hop and train ride away

How often do you change the menu? I asked the chef, six times a year, with the seasons. Six seasons? According to Pierre Wynants, third-generation chef/patron of Comme Chez Soi, the black truffles move on to jets de houbion (or hop shoots), then morilles (the wild mushrooms of May), and primeurs (the first of summer's fruits and vegetables), then early game (wild duck and partridge), and finally the main game season (wild boar, venison and hare) and white truffles.

Here, in the kitchens of one of the world's finest restaurants, I watch M Wynants's brigade, including his son and son-in-law, prepare the exquisite dishes for which the restaurant is famous, including *filets de sole, mouseline ou risling et aux crevettes grises*.

The good news is that Comme Chez Soi, like the rest of the good eating places in Brussels, is now only two hours and 40 minutes from London by Eurostar, less if Ashford is your nearest station.

Each area of Brussels has its *traiteurs*, bakers and pastry shops, and branches of the Delhaize

Bon Vieux Temps and the estaminet L'Imaginaire Notre-Dame in the Impasse des Cadeaux off the Marché aux Herbes, or Le Fiacre near the Bourse. To satisfy the appetite, you will find some good addresses in this area. Chez Léon, Aux Armes de Bruxelles, Restaurant Vincent and 't Kelderke, all serve good food with a distinct flavour of Brussels. Eels in green sauce, *waterzoot* (of fish or chicken), *filet américain* (steak tartare), pigs' trotters, oysters and, of course, mussels, plain, or in a variety of sauces, served with chips, are some of the dishes to look for.

From Brussels, with a car, or by train, you can easily reach other parts of the country, and in doing so, you will find some very good tables. I have been visiting Belgium for several years now at the invitation of the Brussels Food From Britain office, which together with *Ambiance*, a food, wine and travel magazine for both Belgium and The Netherlands, sponsors the Lady Chef Competition.

I have found charming restaurants in the countryside, such as La Barrière in the heart of the Ardennes, where competition-winner Anne Marie Clip cooks seasonal food with a very sure touch.

Her celebratory lunch was based around British produce, and I was most taken with her *consommé*, rich, full-flavoured, with herbs and shredded vegetables but also including strips of Quorn. Her *fillet of South Down lamb* was stuffed with its liver, kidneys, feet and sweetbreads and proved very good as well.

Pointe and shrimp salad

Serves 2
6 to 8 small to medium-size waxy potatoes, such as Charlotte
Handful of green beans, topped and tailed
2 handfuls baby spinach, rinsed and dried
A few leaves of rocket, mâche, or watercress
2 heaped tbsp (about 75-100g) peeled and freshly cooked shrimps
2tbsp fromage frais or yoghurt
1-2tsp grain, Dijon or other mustard
1tbsp chopped dill, chives, or chervil
Seasoning

Scrub and boil the potatoes and, when almost cooked, add the beans. When cooked, drain those vegetables and halve the potatoes. Place the spinach and rocket on two dinner plates. Arrange the beans and potatoes on top, and heap the shrimp in the centre. Mix the fromage frais, mustard and herbs, together with salt and pepper to taste. Spoon over the salad. (Variation: use freshly cooked and shelled mussels in the salad instead of shrimps.)

Consommé with Quorn and herb butter
Serves 2
75g Quorn



Frances Bissell

2tbsp fino sherry
1 bay leaf
1 sprig of thyme
1 small courgette
1 tomato, peeled, seeded and diced
20g softened unsalted butter
Sprig each of chervil, tarragon and basil, chopped
400ml consommé or vegetable broth

Marinate the Quorn in the sherry with the herbs for an hour, and then strain the marinade into the consommé. Cut the Quorn and courgette into julienne. Mix the butter with the herbs, and chill it in a cube. Bring the

consommé to the boil, drop in the courgettes, tomatoes and quorn, cook for 2-3 minutes, and then ladle into hot soup bowls.

Floater a piece of herb butter on top, and serve immediately.

Filets of sole in a white wine sauce with shrimps and mushrooms
(after a recipe by Pierre Wynants)
Serves 2

1 large Dover sole (about 500g) filleted and skinned, but keep the bones
Salt and pepper
1 celery stalk, rinsed and chopped
¼ leek, trimmed, sliced, and rinsed

1 bay leaf
200ml dry white wine
200ml water
50g unsalted butter, chilled and diced
8 button mushrooms, brushed and thinly sliced
2 free-range egg yolks
Dash of freshly grated nutmeg
2tbsp peeled, freshly cooked shrimps
Chervil for garnish

Lightly season the fish fillets, and put to one side. Put the fish bones and skin in a saucepan with the celery, leek, bay leaf and liquid. Bring to the boil, skim the surface, and then simmer on a gently heat for 20-25 minutes. Strain the stock into a clean saucepan, and reduce by two thirds. Heat a non-stick frying pan, and add a nut of butter.

In it fry the mushrooms until just soft. Remove and put to one side. Add a little more butter to the pan, and in it place the sole fillets, folded over. Partially cover the pan, and sweat the fish gently for 4 minutes or so, until barely done. Transfer to warm plates, cover loosely with foil while you finish the dish. Pour the reduced stock into the frying pan, add the egg yolks, and whisk, over very gentle heat, until the sauce thickens but does not curdle. Whisk in the remaining butter, a piece at a time, and then stir in the shrimps and mushrooms. Spoon a little sauce over the fish, and the rest around it. As in the previous recipe, cooked, shelled mussels can replace the shrimps. Or, if you prefer, so can a few oysters.

Belgian sugar tart
Serves 4 to 6
300g puff or rich shortcrust pastry
100g light muscovado sugar
100g dark muscovado sugar
50g ground almonds
150ml double cream
2 large free-range eggs
50g unsalted butter, chilled and diced

Roll the pastry out to about 30cm in diameter, and use it to line a shallow 25-26cm tart tin. Trim the edges, and prick the base all over. Mix the two sugars and the

THE PERFECT MUSSELS

Come out of your shell

AS LONG as none of your guests is allergic to shellfish, a steaming bowl of mussels is a treat on a cold night. It is a beautiful sight, the orange contrasting with the pearly inside of the shell and the blue-black outer surface. And it smells good too.

■ **YOU NEED:** for each person, a litre of mussels, about four tablespoons of dry white wine, a peeled and chopped shallot, a tablespoon of finely chopped parsley and pepper (the mussels carry their own salt).

■ **METHOD:** scrub the mussels under running water, remove any barnacles (as they can release sand into the finished dish), and discard any shells that are open (because they are dead, which can be dangerous). Place in a large lidded pot with the rest of the ingredients. Clamp the lid on, raise the heat, and cook for three to four minutes, shaking well. Transfer to a large heated bowl or serve from the pot. Discard any shells that stay closed (as they were probably dead).

■ **TO SERVE:** start with chateaufort, salad and one or two cheeses, then the mussels with crusty bread, and finish with a fruit compote. Vary the dish by using watercress, rocket, leeks or spinach in place of the parsley; try a pinch of saffron, or use dry cider instead of white wine.

NEXT WEEK:
The perfect burger

almonds, and spread this over the pastry base. Beat the cream and eggs and spread this evenly over the sugar. Dot the surface with butter and bake in a pre-heated oven at 180°C, gas mark 4, for about 30 minutes. Remove from the oven, and transfer the tart to a wire rack. This is best eaten just warm.

● **Comme Chez Soi, 23 Place Royale, 1000 Brussels** (00 32 2 512 2921, fax: 00 32 2 518 0521; Hôtel-Restaurant de la Barrière, rue de la Barrière, 6890 Transinne en Haute-Lesse (00 32 0 165 5037, fax: 00 32 0 165 5532); Food From Britain: contact Charlotte Lawson on 071-233 5111 for addresses of Lady Chef restaurants in Belgium; Eurostar: 0345 303030.

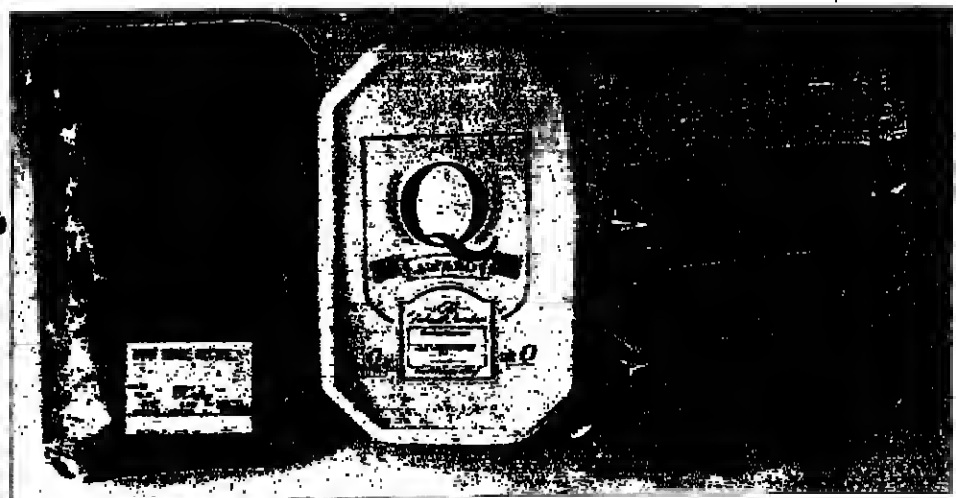
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NEXT WEEK:
The Times Cook in Manhattan

CONSUMING INTERESTS: FARM SAUSAGES

ARE GREAT British bangers only found down on the farm? A survey of sausages from specialist producers around the country suggests that most do not manage products which are even on a par with those that can be found in the better supermarkets, though a very few may be truly

excellent. There were some very amateurish efforts in this selection. My advice for those within reach of a Waitrose store is that none of those reported on here could outstrip my previously nominated best buy, the Waitrose Farmhouse Pork Sausage. **ROBIN YOUNG**



Duchess of Devonshire's Tomato Sausage, £1.90 for 450g from Chotsworth Farm Shop, Stud Farm, Pilsley, Derbyshire, DE45 1UF (01246 583392).
Claims: "Made by our huchers in the farm shop. Minimum 65 per cent meat." **Verdict:** A winner, with a simple recipe of pork, rust, tomatoes and seasoning. (Unlinked, evenly formed (by machines) sausages (six to the pound) in a boxed presentation with sprigs of fresh parsley. Cooked juicily in a jolly, bouncy texture inside over-resilient skins. Tasted well. ★★)

Graig Farm Homemade Organic Plain Pork Sausages, £6.41 per kg, or £7.30 by mail order from Doka, Llandrindod Wells, Powys LD1 5TL (01597 851655).
Claims: Only natural ingredients, no colouring, artificial flavouring or preservatives. Meat content 80 per cent.
Verdict: A dozen to the pound in a long, thin shape, chorizo-like when cooked. Meaty sausages with some chewy bits, but a clean, simple and direct flavour. ★★

Swaddles Green Farm Plain Sausages, £7.60 per kg from Harle Lane, Buckland St Mary, Chard, Somerset, TA20 3XK (01460 234387).
Delivery: free in London or for orders over £80 outside.
Claims: Organic farmers and growers.
Verdict: Wet lumpy house-knit

sausages, which lost a lot of moisture under the grill and yet still sat in puddles on the plate. Messy to eat. Dilute and unattractive flavour. ★

Charles Harris Cornish Pork Sausage, £4.63 per kg from Tywardreath Butchers, 41 Church Street, Tywardreath, Par, Cornwall PL22 2QQ (01726 812051).
Delivery: £10 per order.
Claims: "Champion Sausages". Minimum 70 per cent meat.
Verdict: Bland, rather breadly and a bit boring without condiments. ★

The Sausage Maker Aunt Edna's Recipe, £4.76 per kg from Bryan Pickering, 30 The Street, Old Cottesley, Norwich NR8 5DB (01603 742002).
Delivery: £8.50 per order up to 10kg.
Claims: From a range of over 40 recipes. Aunt Edna's is described as "Lincolnshire-type pork sausage with rubbed sage and black pepper". Seven to the pound. Offers "food delivered to your door anywhere in the UK in just 24 hours" and discounts (5 per cent for 5lb, 10 per cent for 10lb).
Verdict: Well-shaped and firmly formed sausage which cooked nicely and had the advantage of pleasant, even and light spicing, sufficient for interest without being excessive. ★★

J Wickens Family Butchers Pork and Herb, £2.10 per lb (£4.62 per kg) from shop at Castle Street, Winchester, East Sussex TN36 4HU (01797 226287).
Claims: "Genuinely handmade" from free-range, additive-free Gloucester Old Spot pigs.
Verdict: Big and dumpy sausages (eight to the pound) in rough and ready presentation. Marred by excessive use of dried herbs. ★

MORE FOOD & DRINK IN the times magazine

Salad days for active cover girl

Joe Warwick learns about fashion model Lili Maltese's healthy diet

HOME COOKING

As a successful model with the Elite agency, Lili Maltese has graced the pages of fashion magazines such as *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle* and *Marie Claire*. She worked in New York, Paris and Milan for designers such as Versace, Armani and Valentino, before settling in London.

More recently she has been a permanent fixture on the pages of the celebrity glossies *Hello!* and *OK!* by virtue of her relationship and subsequent engagement to Henry Dent-Brocklehurst, owner of Sudeley Castle, with an estimated personal fortune of £50 million. Mr Dent-Brocklehurst himself came to the public attention through his celebrated friendship with Elizabeth Hurley.

The child of Roger and Peggy Sue Maltese, Lili was born in Oregon in 1973 on a return trip from the hippy trail to Afghanistan. Named Lili (meaning passion fruit in Hawaiian) Valentine Maltese, she was raised on the tropical island of Hawaii.

Her father was killed in a car crash when she was only four and her mother raised both her and her brother, Remo, on her own for ten years before she remarried.

Her stepfather is Bill Walker, who designed album covers for the Grateful Dead, the LSD-fuelled band which burst on to the music scene in the late Sixties.

Despite the early tragedy of her father's death, her mother remembers her daughter fondly as a child who was "always wonderful and a lot of fun to be around". Peggy Sue thinks that her own diet may have helped Lili in later life. "What was funny about Lili was when I was pregnant I was really healthy. After she was born she never



The young Lili loved salads

had any sugar until she was about two. She never had a sweet tooth and I really don't know if that's because she didn't have any sugar from an early age."

The Maltese's diet was enviable healthy, making use of the fresh ingredients readily available on the island.

Meat never featured strongly in their meals: "I suppose you could say we had pretty much a vegetarian diet. It was based on whole grains, dairy products, fresh fruit and vegetables. We did eat fish and we did eat chicken sometimes but it was very rarely that we had red meat."

Peggy Sue remembers Lili as a gentle child who always loved animals. "We had this beautiful Great Dane and I remember her crawling all over the dog's back. She was also always interested in horses and riding."

Her mother remembers her as being enthusiastic in the kitchen. "She really loved sal-



Oregon-born Lili Maltese is a familiar face on the pages of glossy magazines

'She loved to cook. She would make these fantastic meals and not even use a recipe'

THE LIVELIEST GINGER SINCE FRED



HOT FROM JAMAICA

ads, she made the best salads. She loved to cook. She was always this very creative cook. Once she got into a routine, she would make these fantastic meals and she would not even use a recipe."

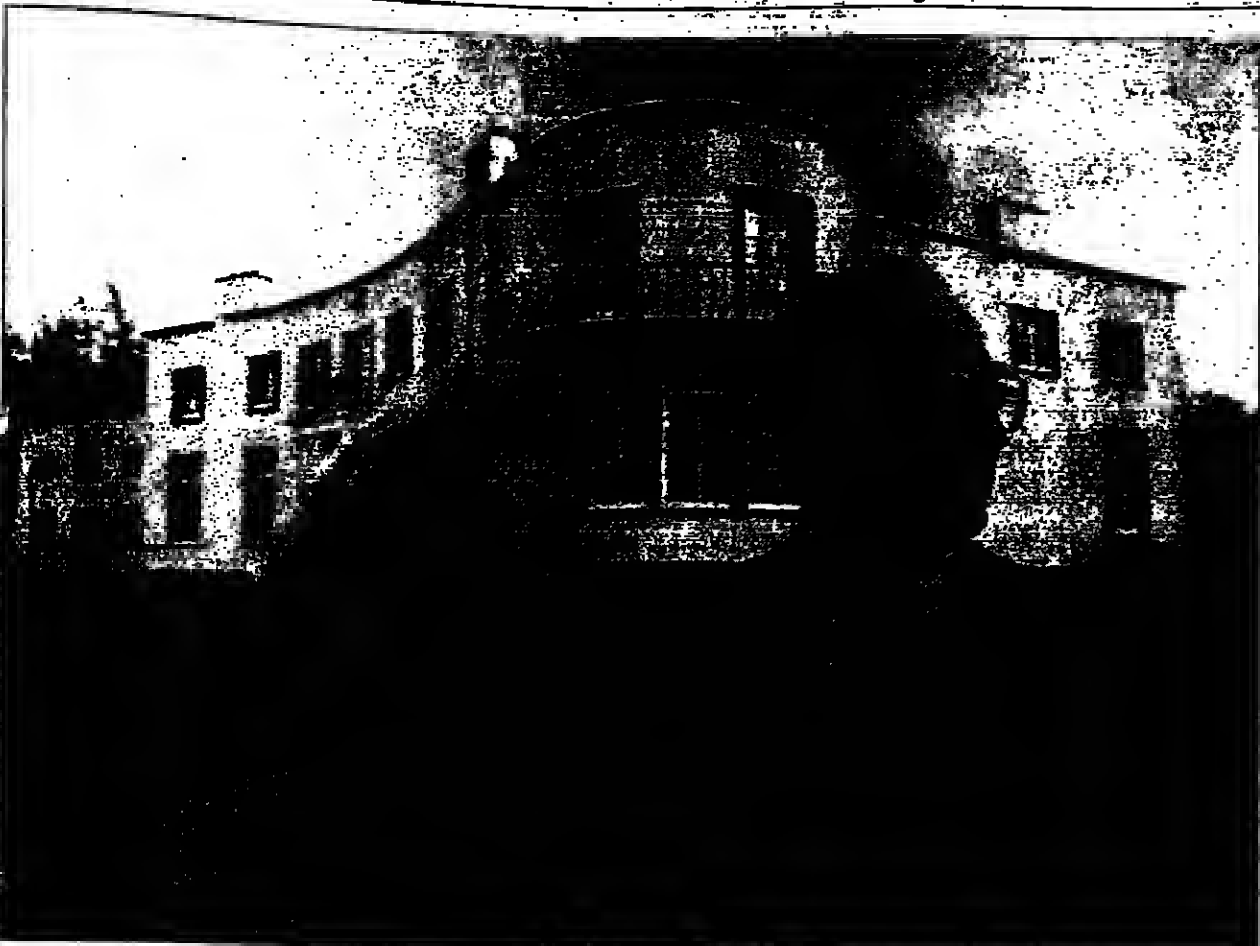
Lili's love of cooking extended to eating it and she never followed a regimented diet. "She never practised real diets. She was probably always naturally slim but she did watch what she was eating. She always ate the right things, but she loved to eat."

At school, Peggy Sue remembers Lili as "particularly into drama. She acted in a lot of plays. She also tried out for a lot of sports."

She did cross-country running for a while. When she began she was one of the worst runners — she stuck at it, though, and did well eventually. She was determined to do her best at whatever she tried."

Lili's healthy eating habits make her a suitable spokeswoman for California Prunes, which she will be promoting during National Prune Week, which starts on March 16.

Marcus Binney visits a well-preserved 1930s home in Stirlingshire with fine original furniture and a swimming pool. All this and his-and-her sock dryers too



Caroline and James MacGregor outside Gribloch, tailor-made to the specifications of a Scottish steel magnate

A Ginger Rogers kind of grandeur

HOUSE OF THE WEEK

Gribloch is one of the most stylish and comfortable 1930s houses ever likely to go on sale. Most original decorative features survive, and it is on offer for £1.2 million with a huge amount of fine original furniture.

The house was built for the Scottish steel magnate John Colville and his Californian wife Helen in 1938-39 and was bought from the Colville family by the present owner, James MacGregor, in 1984.

His wife, Caroline, has written a book about the house, using original letters for research and showing how the Colvilles took ideas from articles in American magazines such as *House Beautiful*, which are all preserved in the library.

The house commands a magnificent panorama of the Grampians and was built on a virgin site where Mr Colville was taken by his nanny to picnic as a boy.

In photographs, Gribloch can look quite modest, but the first glimpses of the long white front from the road below sets the adrenalin racing.

The house is approached up a steep, curving drive (Mr Colville complained to Rolls-Royce that his car wouldn't take it in third gear) and delivers you on a manicured gravel sweep perched on the crest of a hill and surrounded by the shortest of mossy grass.

Mr Colville gave his architect, the young Basil Spence (later the architect of Coventry Cathedral), firm instructions about combining both "the view and the sun" in all the main rooms.

Once the front door is opened you look straight out of the house on the other side, through a giant Oriel window with a sparkling blue swimming pool immediately beyond. When the sun bursts through the clouds the whole staircase, painted a luminous powder blue, is filled with shimmering reflections.

Cascading down across the window is a flying staircase that might have been designed by Ginger Rogers, in which, amazingly, the great Sir



The pool, mosaic, a terracotta seal, and artful acknowledgement of the year of origin



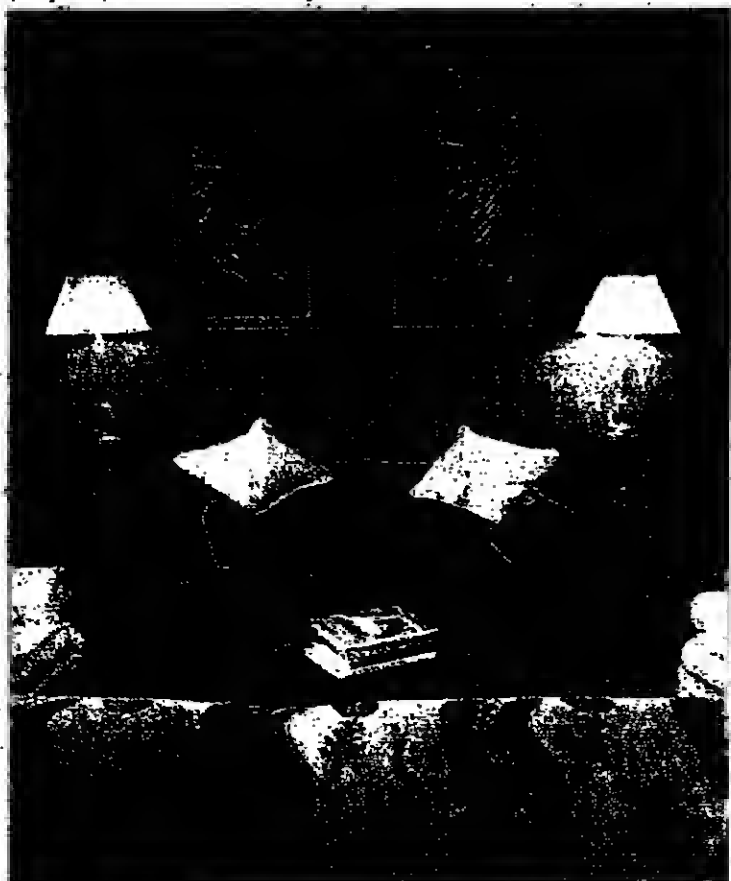
Nikolaus Pevsner had a hand. Mr Spence rose to his brief in the conception of the house but unfortunately became so busy with clients that he called in Perry Duncan, an American architect, to move the plans forward.

He handed the interior decoration over to John Hill, who on the strength of his work here deserves to be mentioned in the same breath as Oliver Messel. He responded perfectly to the Colvilles' desire for elegant understatement, achieving impact by brilliant use of fresh, mainly pale

Above: lovebirds gather above a finely crafted and highly intricate window grille, one of many original features that have been preserved

colours and superb decorative details. The hall has a wonderfully original shell and rope cornice and bold matching rope mouldings around the doors and archways. His carpet, in

shades of mulberry, blue, white and beige, was woven to the original design in Axminster and still lies on the floor. The living room has wrap-around windows with the original bullion-fringed pel-



Sunlight reflecting off the sparkling blue swimming pool bathes the gracefully arching staircase in warm light



Above: a curved window affords a spectacular view of the mountains in the distance

Left: Japanese furnishing lends a sitting room an oriental charm

the socks could be stretched. In the kitchen corridor is a cupboard for drying kindling sticks. Every prospective purchaser asks Mr MacGregor about the wind. He points out that the trees around the house are not bent or bowed like some in the valley below.

Fast-moving clouds mean the sun is constantly breaking through, illuminating distant hills and the valley below. Sunsets are spectacular, and if there is mist, it often hovers on the valley floor, turning it into a vast loch.

Gribloch comes with three self-contained cottages — a game lodge and staff houses on either side of a capacious 13-

car garage made out in a half-circle like a Victorian engine shed, complete with inspection pit.

There is a sandstone wall garden and a peach house complete with peaches, nectarines and camellias, though it is in need of extensive restoration. Scented azaleas and huge rhododendrons abound.

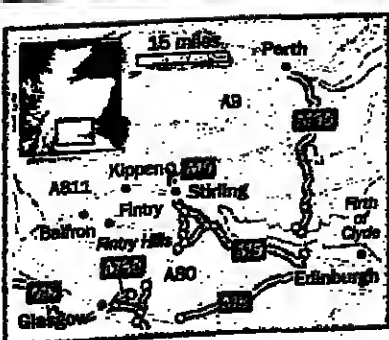
Beside the swimming pool is a terracotta seal balancing a revolving copper ball on its nose. This may need attention, but the Tivoli-style wall of water jets spouting across the pool still work at the press of a button.

● Agent: Knight Frank, 0131-225 8771.

GRIBLOCH lies in the rich countryside of the Fintry Hills in Stirlingshire, more or less plumb in the middle of Scotland. The area is not exactly studded with villages, but unspoilt centres such as Kippend, Balfour and Fintry itself are popular with buyers. With Stirling only ten miles or so to the east, Edinburgh 45 miles southeast and Glasgow 28 miles south, this is prime commuting territory for prosperous urban Scots and incomers from south of the border. There has also been a renewed influx of families in which the breadwinner is based in the southeast of England, flying down to the office for three or four days a week.

The area offers easy access to Scotland's natural attractions. It is about an hour's drive to the wilds and the skiing country of the Highlands at Glen Coe; the sea lochs of the west coast are also under an hour away. This central position can add a premium of 20 to 30 per cent to properties in comparison to, say, the Highlands or the southern Border country. Don't expect to find a wealth of 1930s

MARKET COMMENT



properties here, but there is no shortage of 19th-century farmhouses, often with a baronial turret or two added by romantically inclined Victorian industrialists or merchants. These generally have six to ten bedrooms, but they can vary enormously in price: the more remote or decrepit cost as little as £250,000, while those in the best condition and with a few acres may fetch £500,000-plus. Colin Strang Steele.

at Knight Frank's Edinburgh office observes that the law of diminishing returns sets in as properties in this part of the world get above a certain size, so these rambling houses may represent relatively good value for money. On the other hand, they tend to be damp, draughty and rambling, and often need plenty of restoration and maintenance.

MOST POPULAR, he says, are the medium-sized country properties of four or five bedrooms, which may be Georgian manor houses (£500,000-plus with land), farmhouses (£250,000 to £400,000). "We suffer from a lack of middle-sized houses with a few acres attached," he explains, "because the estates in Scotland have not been broken up in the way they have been in England." At the lower end of the market, meanwhile, one can pick up village cottages for £100,000 to £150,000, though they are usually small and unlikely to be the rural idyll of the average Cotswold village.

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EXPRESSING YOUR INTERIOR WORLD

Guarantees that aren't built to last

A Buildmark warranty will not automatically protect buyers of new homes against building defects, says Emma Haughton

When Val and Richard Hockey moved into their new £295,000 home in Wincoburn, Buckinghamshire, they immediately encountered problems. "When we tried to put up a blind, the window fell out," Mrs Hockey says. "The stairs were not attached to the house, water came through the kitchen ceiling from the shower, and the chimney caught fire."

As the developer had gone bust, the National House Building Council sent in builders to carry out repairs under its ten-year warranty. "It was very distressing," she says, "but we kept telling ourselves it was just a nuisance and the structure of the house was OK."

But when the detached garage started cracking, the Hockeys became suspicious: an independent survey found their house walls were free-standing, and the loft and roof were unsound. "The whole structure is balanced like a house of cards with nothing holding it together," says Mrs Hockey, who can't take baths because the floor joists are faulty.

This time the NHBC was less helpful. It paid for the garage, but offered just £1,000 worth of work to cover an estimated £60,000-£100,000 worth of repairs to the house. Mrs Hockey is understandably bitter. "We didn't have a survey done when we bought the house because we felt reassured by the warranty guarantee against faulty workmanship and structural defects, but the NHBC said we hadn't got actual damage and they weren't liable."

The Hockeys are not unusual. A survey of 2,000 homes by HAPM Insurance found widespread failure to meet basic building standards, with problems ranging from poor sound insulation and ventilation to badly designed and constructed windows and doors. According to Professor Malcolm Hollis, surveyor and chair of building surveying at Reading University, the industry wastes 10 per cent of total construction costs on repairing defects.

The result of the Hockeys' case is welcome news for buyers. "They expect that if anything goes wrong it will be dealt with quickly," says Professor Hollis. "Unfortunately, this is rarely the case."

Just how rarely has filled some 3,000 files at the Association of New Home Owners, set up two years



The chimney caught fire

ago by Chris Lorentzen, who found more than 100 defects in his new £140,000 home in West Sussex. People rarely get full structural surveys done, he explains, because there is a false perception that every new home is constructed to rigorous government controls, and that the warranty is a guarantee.

There are also growing concerns about the effectiveness of NHBC and building-control inspections. While local authorities once examined every home for compliance to government regulations, in 1985 the NHBC was licensed to perform inspections for building control as well as its own warranty. "Builders can now either buy inspections from the council, who ensure everything is done properly, or from private inspectors, who are far more lenient," says Professor Hollis, pointing out that most houses receive far less than the 11 or so inspections necessary to ensure all the elements are checked.

Even those in the trade can be caught out. Despite drawing up approved plans, employing a structural surveyor to oversee much of the work, and using an NHBC-

approved builder, architect Martin Byrne found extensive water penetration in his detached home in Northern Ireland.

In pursuit of compensation, he undertook NHBC arbitration but, after a counterclaim from the builder and costs, ended up £15,000 out of pocket; the NHBC's latest offer of £20,000 still falls far short of the £65,000 repair bill.

Although 1.7 million householders are covered by the NHBC's ten-year Buildmark warranty, many misunderstand the protection it offers. Rather than a guarantee, it is an insurance policy which for two years holds the builder responsible for breaches of required standards, then for the remaining eight years warranties against significant structural damage. "It only deals with the major defects," says Professor Hollis. "but the minor ones are where all the money goes."

According to NHBC spokesperson Jane Chapman, the council receives 3,000 valid claims each year on about 160,000 new properties, and last year it paid out £15 million under the Buildmark warranty. "We do recognise that problems occur and, where they do, the warranty covers people; those with long-standing problems should continue to contact our claims department."

Nevertheless, the NHBC is taking steps to improve its service, she says, with a new disciplinary committee for wayward builders, a layperson's guide to the warranty, a site manager accreditation scheme and a new computerised claims system.

• The Association of New Home Owners, 22 Abbey Road, Steyning, West Sussex BN14 4JQ.

HOW TO AVOID THE PITFALLS

- Read sales literature carefully before paying a deposit. Ask for any additional information in writing.
- Always get a full structural survey, but bear in mind that even the best surveyor cannot examine hidden areas like foundations.
- Beware show home tricks, like using undersized furniture to make rooms look bigger.
- Ask for a full copy of warranty documents and have all exclusions and limitations fully explained to you.
- Make subtle inquiries with neighbours about the site's history.
- Avoid houses built on contaminated land.
- Ask who carried out Building Control Regulation inspections and how many visits were made to the site.



Val Hockey's new home in Buckinghamshire which, independent surveyors found, was "balanced like a house of cards"



The cracked walls of the detached garage caused suspicion



The staircase which was not actually attached to the house

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THE TIMES

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CHANGING TIMES

طريقنا من الامم

Acquiring a French property can be arduous, but one couple found their efforts ultimately brought rich rewards

Our peaceful Norman conquest

Last summer, a dreamy, wine-fuelled conversation about escape, trout fishing and long outdoor suppers led my brother Miles, friend Toby and I to browse through *French Property News*. Since January, Miles and I — Toby having sobered up — are the proud, if still faintly bemused, owners of an uninhabitable farmhouse near Montreuil.

By the time we saw it, Miles had spent a fruitless day in Normandy with an English agent who thought him a time-waster, and I had made appointments, through the London company Northern & Western France Properties, with three agents in Pas de Calais. One didn't show up and another showed me several depressing houses before asking me to translate a property blurb into English and turning down my copy with a sniff. The last agent was Jean-Pierre Lemaire of Acti' Imm, Montreuil sur Mer, who speaks excellent English and, though our budget was relatively small, was keen to find us the right thing.

On only our second visit he showed us a long, low, light *fermette* with beamed ceilings, attached barn and a river at the bottom of the garden. In spite of peeling wallpaper (in the ugliest patterns ever sold), "mains water" that consisted of a stand-pipe in the main room, and an outside lavatory (some plumbing standing majestically over a pit in a doorless, roofless structure by the road, we knew that this was it. "Home"



The farmhouse near Montreuil cost Fr190,000. It has beamed ceilings, an attached barn and a river at the bottom of the garden, but needs Fr300,000 spent on renovation

is just 55 minutes from the Channel Tunnel. I was scribbling on graph paper within hours.

Unfortunately, other English buyers felt the same way and got in first, but they wanted to turn the house into Bienheim Palace-sur-Créquoise and were frightened off by the builder's estimate.

A nerve-racking difference between the French system and the English is that surveyors do not exist in France: you base your

decision to purchase, or not, on a builder's estimate. We flirted with the idea of using a British surveyor, but decided on a "when in Paris" policy, which we also followed when it came to the legalities of the purchase and did not retain a British solicitor.

French conveyancing is relatively simple so the agent in London explained the paperwork and we went with the flow. Some four months and Fr190,000 (about

'In spite of peeling wallpaper, water from a stand-pipe and an outside lavatory standing over a pit, we knew this was it'

£19,000) later (plus agents' fees, notaire's fees and taxes — not to mention the Fr300,000 for basic renovation) the *à vendre* sign was removed. Our total budget is Fr550,000, so it's lucky I'm good with junk and a staple gun.

The builder, Dominic Rota of Bâtiments des Sept Vallées, Offin, was recommended by Jean-Pierre and, after a fustian of estimates and hours of negotiation over champagne and charcuterie at his

house, is making the house comfortable but not *chi-chi*. Although our communications rely heavily on mime and the *Oxford Hachette* dictionary, we are confident that all will be well. (We all relaxed when Dominic, thinking glazed interior doors a ludicrous affectation, responded to my request for them with a dismissive "bouffe" and characteristic Gallic shrug. Reckless with champagne, I laughed "bouffe quoi?", which led

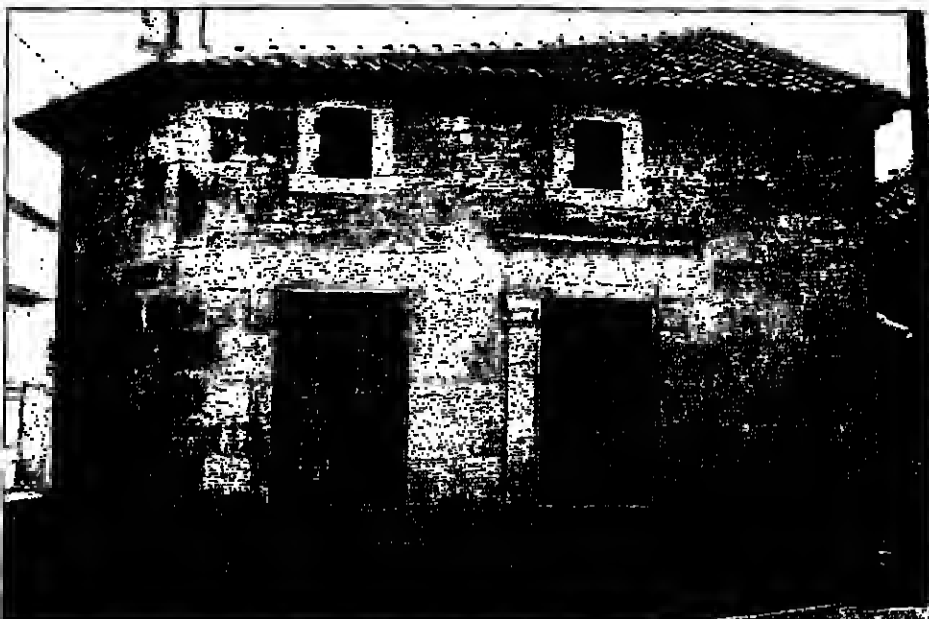
to a feeble joke about mad "bouffe" disease, agreement on the door issue and a general sense that we would manage to understand each other somehow.)

We did read around the subject, but relied mainly upon our instincts — ask me next year if this was wise. According to friends who have second homes in France, we have been lucky: we were introduced to a good agent who in turn organised a builder, bank and insurance company; we found our paradis remarkably quickly; and there have been no horrors so far.

We remain enchanted by our house and charmed by the people we meet because of it. When I was first looking for Dominic's house I approached a rubicund, older man wearing a shabby beret and trousers held up by twine. I explained that we were completely lost, whereupon he smiled and replied: "No one is truly lost in this life." Let's not wax too romantic, though: I still can't drive from Montreuil to the house without taking at least one wrong turn.

STEPHANIE LEWIS

● French Property News: 0181-447 1834. Northern & Western France Properties: 0181-991 1750. Buying & Renting Old Property in France by David Everett (Robert Hales includes invaluable French/English glossary of building terms). A Complete Guide to Buying a Home in France by Vivienne Menckley (Simon and Schuster) gives clear practical information.



This three-bedroom, stone-built cottage in the Charente is on the market at £40,000

Prime time for Channel vision

WHERE TO

Houses on the other side of the English Channel have never been so cheap, thanks to the strength of the pound against the French franc, now worth almost ten to the pound, having gained a third in value during the past two years.

The French domestic housing market is still in the doldrums, prices having fallen in some areas by 30 to 40 per cent since 1990. Owners are keen to sell and prospective purchasers can often negotiate up to 15 per cent off asking prices. In many rural areas British buyers are the driving force.

Vivien Bridge, of Northern & Western France Properties, says the British market for French property is booming. "Many Britons are crossing the Channel to buy weekend retreats. Others are looking to settle in France, often for retirement. With a strong pound, it makes sense to buy now. The future for sterling is uncertain, with the imminent arrival of the European monetary unit in nine months."

There are bargains to be

Cheryl Taylor

offers a guide to the places, prices and pitfalls that await Britons

looking to buy a home in France

had in lower Normandy, a 90-minute drive from the ferry port of Caen. Rock-bottom on the price chart is a two-bedroom village house near Domfront for £4,500. It has a new roof and a septic tank, but needs another £5,000 to make it habitable. The UK agent is Authentic France.

The same agent is asking £21,500 for a renovated two-bedroom stone-built house with a secluded garden, close to Avranches and the beaches of Mont St Michel.

English buyers happy to make the long ferry crossing from Plymouth to Roscoff or Portsmouth to St Malo can find a home at less than half

the price they would pay on the southwest coast of England. You can pick up a habitable stone-built cottage in Brittany for less than £20,000, though most will need updating.

Domus Abroad is asking £46,000 for an attractive six-bedroom, four-bathroom, mill house in good condition, 30 minutes' drive inland from St Malo and the beaches of the Côte d'Armor. It comes with a two-acre garden, a small forest and a meadow, bordered by a stream.

Further west at Huelgoat, a few miles inland from the Côte de Granite Rose (pink granite coast) with its small bays and white sandy beaches, you can buy a two-bedroom character cottage in a one-acre garden for £21,000, through Northern & Western France Properties.

Prices are lower in central

Britany, about two hours' drive from Roscoff or St Malo. Small market towns and villages, such as Floer and Josselin, about 40 minutes' drive inland from the south coast, have plenty of old terraced houses for renovation, priced from £15,000.

For a cheap rustic retreat, you might fancy the Mayenne, an unspoilt farming region, about 90 minutes' drive south of St Malo. A habitable three-bedroom country house with thick stone walls, a slate roof, beamed ceilings and an open fireplace can be had for £12,000. The agent is Northern & Western France Properties.

South of Angoulême, the

capital of the Charente, the

houses are bigger and the

weather is warmer. This is the

Cognac area of France, six

hours from Waterloo by

Eurostar/TGV, where you can

buy a three-bedroom country

cottage, with thick honey-

stone walls, for £30,000 to

£40,000. A huge stone farmhouse for conversion, with numerous outbuildings and a few acres, can had from £50,000.

The Haute-Vienne is a little-known region close to the Dordogne but half the price. Stick to the southern border of the Dordogne for a warmer, drier climate. The French Property Shop is asking £18,000 for part of a small rural hamlet near Rochechouart. The price includes three old stone houses — two are habitable, one for restoration — plus barns and an acre of land. Allow another £20,000 to restore the third house.

There have been some



The romantic notion of idyllic summer days spent at a second home in the French countryside has become easier to attain thanks to the franc's decline, and British buyers have not been slow to capitalise. With the euro arriving in nine months, there may never be a better time to buy

dramatic price reductions in the Lot-et-Garonne south of the Dordogne. A restored five-bedroom period house in a village near Puymirat was on the books of the French Property Shop in January 1997 at Fr530,000, then costing £70,500. Now, it is priced at Fr400,000, about £40,000. A similar house in Surrey would cost £250,000.

The Languedoc, next door to Provence and bordered by the Mediterranean, is the poor man's Riviera. The weather is hot and dry and property prices are much cheaper than on the Côte d'Azur. For £10,000 you can buy an 18-square metre studio in a modern block on the Mediterranean at Cap d'Agde, a lively

harbourside resort, between

Sète and Béziers.

A similar waterfront flat

around St Tropez could cost

£100,000, according to Nigel

Paige of Authentic France,

which has a selection of stu-

dios, flats and townhouses for

sale at Cap d'Agde. One-

bedroom flats with a balcony

on the seafront cost

from £15,000 to £20,000;

£35,000 for those with a moor-

ing alongside.

The *notaire* is a public

official who ensures that

the sale transaction is carried

out in accordance with French

law. One *notaire* can represent

both parties in the transac-

tion, but purchasers who

wish to ensure their interests

are protected can appoint their

own.

Some British-based solic-

itors can advise on French

conveyancing. Most charge

between £130 and £250 to vet

the preliminary agreement,

then by the hour, for subse-

quent advice. On average, the

fee is likely to be £600 to £800

for the entire transaction. Buy-

ers pay a deposit of 10 per cent

of the purchase price on sign-

ing the preliminary contract —

compromis de vente.

All conveyancing costs, in-

cluding notary fees and taxes,

amounting to 10-12 per cent of

the purchase price, plus the 6-8

per cent for the estate agent

(the cheaper the property the

higher the percentage), must

be paid by the purchaser.

If you sell your French home

within two years of purchase

you must pay 33.6 per cent of

the profit in tax. Keep any

receipts for repairs, as these

can be set against your final

tax bill. The longer you hold

on to your property, the less

tax you pay.

INHERITANCE

If you own a property in

France, a French will is

vital. Although an English will

is valid in France it has to be

proven in a French court

before it can be put into effect.

If it does not conform to the

French rules of inheritance, it

may not be enforceable.

French inheritance laws

ensure that certain members

of your family (but not

spouses) have an absolute

right to inherit a part of your

estate. Should a spouse die,

their half of the house does not

automatically pass to the sur-

vivor, even if that wish was

specified in a will.

If you have one child, half of

your estate must go to him or

her. If you have two children,

they each get a third, and so

on. This could cause problems

for the spouse, particularly if

the children were from a

husband's previous marriage.

If you have no children, the

first claim on your estate is

your parents.

There are ways around

French succession rules, but

expert legal advice is essential.

● Authentic France, 01258

821372; Northern & Western

France Properties (see above);

The French Property Shop, 01892

852449; English solicitors

specialising in French

conveyancing: Anthony Wilkin

of Things & Long 01225 448444

and Stephen Smith of Preys

Solicitors 01473 232121.



THE SCOTTISH estate (above) belonging to the late Roger Brothers, famed for their art and furniture collection, has been sold for £2 million by agents Langley Taylor, Dundon-Nell, a 33,500-acre estate near Inverness, has a laird's house and landscaped gardens, along with deer forest and trout fishing. Bunny and Alan Rogers died last year.

THE house lived in by post-Marxist political scientist Harold Laski (right) from 1926 until his death in 1950 is for sale for £750,000 through agents Chesterton's. The historic four-storey Georgian town house features six bedrooms, a spacious drawing room, and a blue Heritage plaque on the front.

THE Duke and Duchess of Luxembourg are selling their south France holiday home La Romane for £1.85 million through agents John Taylor. Five minutes from the village of Biot near Nice and 15 minutes from the coast, the property includes a main house, a small chapel which has been converted to a guest house, and a three-room staff cottage. The "Grand Duke" (right), otherwise known as the Duke of Masso or the Prince Bourbon-Palmer, was a colonel in the Irish Guards and is married to Princess Josephine Charlotte of Belgium.

SMART MOVES



TORY MP Bill Cash is letting the Gate House adjoining his 14th-century Shropshire home through agents Blandings. The two-bedroom, two-bathroom stone tower rises out of a magical garden; just far enough away from the main house to ensure privacy. Mr Cash and wife Biddy have recently renovated their home.

RACHEL KELLY

طوكيو من الامم

A contemporary garden would be an ideal tribute to the life of Diana, Princess of Wales, Barbara Abbs writes

Memorial fit for a modern princess



Angular bench used by Mr West

The idea of recreating a historic garden as an appropriate setting for Kensington Palace is a good one. It should be done. Whether it should be a memorial to the always-modern Diana, Princess of Wales, is another question.

Among those who feel that the late Princess would be more fittingly commemorated by something unmistakably contemporary are several members of the Society of Garden Designers. It was about the time the society was holding a conference, entitled "Order and Adventure [in garden design]", that a letter appeared in *The Times* suggesting that the memorial garden be designed at Kensington Palace by an art historian, albeit one who is also a serious and talented gardener.

Delegates to the conference had heard a lecture by Dr Louisa Jones on the state of garden design in France and one on the work of the Belgian designer Jacques Wirtz and his company by his son, Peter. The public parks of Kathryn Gustafson, the landscape architect, the exciting private garden in France of the late Nicole de Vesian and the pictures of Wirtz designs all over Europe created moods of exhilaration and depression in the audience.

They drooled over sculptural hedges following the contours of the landscape, over architectural cascades and light-hearted fountains that could not have been designed in any other period except today. Even motorway reservations attracted plaudits.

Then they came down to earth. Patrons in Britain, public or private, only rarely ask for modern design. Our designers could do it and would do it, but complained that so often they were asked to do Gertrude Jekyll pastiches or historical reconstructions.

The British have a love affair with Jekyll that seems to intensify with each new anniversary. The two most famous gardens in Britain, one designed by an American, the post-modernist architect Charles Jencks, and the other, Little Sparta, is closed to the public because the local planning department has no idea of what a modern garden is.

One designer who passionately believes in the modern garden is Jill Billington. She designed exciting small gardens in London, but longs to be asked to mastermind broad acres. She describes her style as contemporary minimalism. Sensitivity to the site and to the owners and a lack of gimmicks produces gardens that are easy to live with.

One commission, in Hampstead, was for a courtyard in front of



In his Teddington garden, designer Cleve West has put a garden shed almost centre stage. The roof, covered in grass, is used to create an arch that is ecological, dramatic and fun

a glass-walled studio containing one or two pieces of dramatic modern furniture. The white tiled floor inside is edged in the white slabs outside and spiky grasses and bold evergreens are planted in the surrounding pebbles. "Ms Billington is philosophical. 'People come to gardening from many different viewpoints and I realise that only a minority will ever be interested in the sort of garden I'd like to design,'" she says.

There are several reasons why this minority is smaller here than in Europe or the United States. Many gardeners live in older houses and feel that a modern

design would not look right. Paul Cooper, who is based in Wales but does much of his design work in London, says that although many London houses are elegant and traditional at the front, they can be extremely ugly, "all plumbing and London brick", at the back. There is

no reason to stick to the safety of tradition.

More importantly, institutions in the UK are timid when it comes to commissioning landscape architects and designers. The public is not given the opportunity to become comfortable with really modern landscape design.

In France, Kathryn Gustafson was commissioned by the small town of Terrasson-la-Villedieu to design a public park while Jacques Wirtz and his team are involved in the re-design of the Tuileries Gardens in Paris. The Garden Festival at Chaumont-sur-Loire is full of the most way-out gardens and people flock to see them.

Mr Cooper could compete with the most avant-garde European designer. His constructivist garden, using glass, stainless steel and plastic, and containing orange and black flowers, caused a sensation at the Chelsea Flower Show a few years ago. Unfortunately, it did not appear to advantage against the French Formal Garden, the Old Abbey Garden and the reconstruction of a Victorian greenhouse that were popular that year. Chelsea is really about horticulture while Mr Cooper's work can be better described as exterior design.

One of his recent commissions has been to design a garden for a modern house at Golders Green. Here, a tiny damp garden, surrounded by huge, gloomy conifers, has a lighting system, walls covered in white foam panels,

The British public is not given the chance to see really modern landscape design



Mr West mixes simple, geometric plans and unusual materials

transparent screens and projected images. The garden changes its character from hour to hour. Seats are suspended 12 feet off the ground so that the owners can sit in sunshine.

This year, Mr Cooper's garden at the Chelsea Flower Show will be based on paintings: not the nostalgic watercolours of Helen Allingham or even the Impressionists, but the much bolder in-your-face paintings of the Fauves and Kandinsky.

Cleve West is a designer who combines wit and style with a feeling for the rhythms of nature. In his own garden, a recreation of his award-winning project at Hampton Court Palace Flower Show a few years ago, the garden shed almost takes centre stage. The roof, covered with flower-studded grass, extends over the path and is supported by timber uprights creating an arch and focal point that is ecological, dramatic and fun.

Both Ms Billington's and Mr West's designs are attractive to owners who like gardening. You can potter about with plants and arrange, as they do, bold groups of

contrasting foliage such as phormiums, acanthus and the Japanese loquat, *Eriobotrya japonica*, or subtle colour schemes.

Both designers also use simple, geometric plans and unusual materials. Ms Billington has paved a garden with wonderful slabs of flame-textured green slate from Kirkstone quarry in Ambleside. In his garden, Mr West used granite sets that seemed to float on water. Imagine combining some of these ideas with a water cascade and the sort of trick fountains that children play in that the designers have used in France. Now that truly would capture the spirit of the People's Princess.

● Jill Billington can be contacted on 0181-886 0896, Paul Cooper on 01544 232374 and Cleve West on 0181-977 6470. The Society of Garden Designers is at 6 Borough Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT2 6BD (0181-974 9483). ● Jill Billington's latest book, *Really Small Gardens*, is published by Quadrille/Royal Horticultural Society, price £25. ● The Chelsea Flower Show will be held at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, May 19-22.

Dig that Chinese patch

Jane Owen finds order is key in a Feng Shui garden

When is a garden not a garden? John Brookes's "outside room" of the Sixties has been translated into a dramatic architectural picture or sculpture, where plants are almost an afterthought.

At one end of the garden spectrum stand Jekyll, Hobhouse, Lloyd and all the other great plantmen and women. At the other is a growing band of architects and designers from David Hicks to Sir Roy Strong, Maggie Keswick and Charles Jencks, who use monocultural plantings to bring drama and elegance to a landscape rather than flowers and leaf pattern to create the gentle prettiness associated with traditional English gardens.

John Wyer, who designed the dramatic central London courtyard pictured below, is one of the new breed of garden makers. Although he trained as a landscape architect at Manchester, he is heavily influenced by Chinese gardens. Such is his enthusiasm for China that he once cycled all the way there. He visited a variety of Chinese gardens, studied Feng Shui, and now recreates such gardens from London to Taiwan.

But that only partly explains this garden. As Mr Wyer points out, it takes a client with daring and imagination to put into effect such a bold scheme.

The client is a European businessman, determined to remain anonymous for the purpose of this exercise, with an interest in Zen, Feng Shui and Eastern mysticism. He is also a perfectionist, which is why this garden is relatively high maintenance — a team prims and preens it for several hours every week — despite the simplicity of the planting.

"The first rule of Feng Shui is that there should be no clutter. Good design reflects that idea anyway, but this client likes his garden kept so that not a leaf is out of place," Mr Wyer says.

His brief took three years of altered plans and fine tuning before it was eventually built last June. "The client wanted a garden that could be looked at rather than used. But the plot is dark and dank, it faces north and it is overlooked on all sides by tall buildings. So we used Feng Shui to overcome these problems. It is a matter of balancing the yin and the yang and controlling the 'chi' or energy flow through the garden."

In Feng Shui it is believed that wealth and health is ensured by having water flowing towards the house, so a water feature was installed. However, getting the water surface to be seen to be moving (crucial in fulfilling the Feng Shui idea) needed a far more powerful pump than anyone had bargained for.

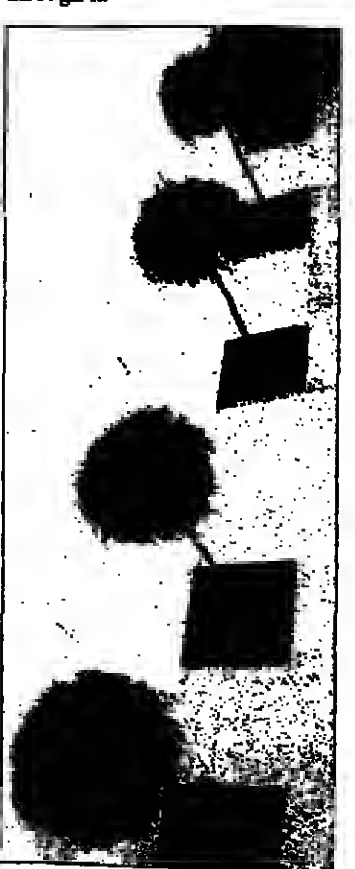
Portuguese laurel lollipop have been clipped into simple, round shapes, a theme echoed in the curve of the laurel leaves and the rounded river-washed marble chippings on the garden floor, which give the area a light, almost airy feel.

There are five elements in Feng Shui — water, fire, soil, metal and wood. So the red wall is fire and it helps to counteract the negative flow of energy caused by this garden facing north. The beds are edged with stainless steel and the wood comes from the trees.

The box hedging at the end of the garden has been squared off and clipped into a proper hedge shape.

There is a synergy between many of the principles of Feng Shui and garden design. In the end, a garden has to blend calmness and energy. Like the energy of the wind rushing across water with the calm someone feels when they sit in a garden.

Although, should anybody attempt to sit in the garden, I think they would be tidied away in case they interrupted the chi flowing through it.



Garden took three years to create



Paul Cooper created a "hanging garden" with white foam panels for this Golders Green plot



STEPHEN ANDERTON'S GARDEN ANSWERS

Q Last year I had an outbreak of big bud on blackcurrant bushes, and removed all the infected buds. How can I prevent a recurrence? — I. Howard, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire

A Big bud is a problem caused by tiny mites infesting the buds, causing them to become swollen and

rounded during the winter. Eventually, they dry on the plant and fall to grow. The mites also spread blackcurrant virus. You are correct to remove all infected buds when they can be clearly identified in late winter, but this will not eradicate the problem. If you feel this year it is under control, fine — otherwise, pull out the

bushes after fruiting and replace them next winter.

Q I have had the blue climber *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin' for the past nine years on a south-facing garage wall, in an 18in deep border abutting a concrete patio. For the first few years, it flowered well, but now it flowers little, and grows little. The roots do not appear to be very deep in the soil. How do I rejuvenate it, or do I replace it? — S. Conry, Coventry

A Thin borders under south walls are always



dry and hungry. However good the preparation of the soil at the time of planting, plants and especially vigorous climbers eventually run out of steam. Roots come to the surface in search of what scraps of nutrition and moisture might come their way.

I would thin out the top growth by 80 per cent in March, leaving just a framework of the main stems and some younger shoots coming from them. Then give it a good dressing of bonemeal, and a generous mulch over its root area of rich, but properly rotted, compost or

manure. If the only mulch you can offer is something ornamental rather than nutritious, such as cocoa shells, then you need to give a richer dressing of artificial fertiliser underneath. Either way, I would give the plant a fortnightly can of liquid feed this year. That way it will not lack for water, and you will be sure of getting it to take up some goodness.

● Write to Garden Answers, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington St, London E1 6XN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility. Enclosures cannot be returned.

Great for work, rest and plays

ME AND MY GARDEN: JOHN MORTIMER

His wife is shooting and hunting in Devon. John Mortimer is alone at the home he has inhabited all his life, surrounded by the 50 acres, three cultivated, where *Voyage Round My Father* was set and filmed. He has a flat in London but never uses it, preferring, after a day in town, to glide back to this secluded end of the Chilterns, near Henley-on-Thames.

"When my father built this house, in the Thirties, his idea was to have a small house and a big garden. The house is designed to look out over the garden in all directions. I couldn't live anywhere else. The whole thing is very important to my life," he says.

When his father made the garden from a field, he had several gardeners. Now there is one, Peter Hayes, who is also the Mortimers' driver.

Running west from the house there was once a long herbaceous border. This has been replaced by a low-maintenance shrubbery with a path down the centre. Behind this are two deep pits filled with old beech trees and holly scrub.

As a boy, Mr Mortimer turned one of these into an amphitheatre where he would put on his own plays. "Because I was an only child I did all the parts. I did Hamlet, King Lear and Othello — and I used to duel with myself and murder myself as well."

This area is called Gravelly Wood, so I suppose these were gravel pits at one time. It's a good place for children. I've got grandchildren older than my youngest," says Mr Mortimer who married twice, both times to a woman called Penelope.

At the end of the shrubbery walk is a semi-circular white bench, which has seen better days, backed by a semi-circle of yew which has been cut right back after years of neglect. Fifty metres or so further on is a wilderness seething with the first spears of thousands of daffodils and planted with specimen trees, including acers, azaleas, a strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*), magnolias, a contorted hazel, and some flowering cherries. "When it's in flower this one looks like a crouching Japanese wrestler," he says of one old cherry.

Mr Mortimer's father planted most of the trees here but was helped by his son (an infrequent event) to plant a large evergreen, *Eucryphia glutinosa*. The main garden at the front of the house,



John Mortimer's parents

with views across rolling beechwoods, is dominated by a tree of heaven at the centre of the lawn and, to one side, a magnificent blue cedar planted for George V's silver jubilee.

"And here is the pool that I put in," Mr Mortimer says. "My mother would have thought it was horrendously vulgar."

Beyond the pool area a giant green and yellow mobile, called "Conversation Piece", nods in the wind. It was commissioned by Mrs Mortimer from John Piper's grandson, Henry, and made in the colours of the house (which has a green roof and yellow woodwork) for her husband's last birthday.

All tapestry hedges, woven in with ivy, separate this area from the kitchen garden, which is fertilised with manure from the stables. There are strawberries, sprouts, leeks, spinach, red lettuce, soft fruit, a pear and knobbly old cordon apples planted in the 1930s which produce a huge mound of cooking apples.

"Everything seemed to grow more when I was a child," Mr Mortimer says. "And I don't seem to be able to grow all the things that my father grew, such as asparagus, nectarines and peaches."

"The garden is not as grand as it was. I spend lots of money at garden centres and I always listen to *Gardeners' Question Time*, but if you did all the things they said you'd never get anything else done."

Pots of cymbidium orchids, at



John Mortimer with his orchids. "I'm quite good with flowers," says the author whose role in the garden is mostly supervisory

one end of a heated greenhouse in the kitchen garden, will move into Mr Mortimer's study as they flower, or be put outside during the height of summer. Two are in flower, one white, one green, beside a double pink amaryllis and some white hyacinths in his study.

"I'm quite good with flowers," he says, confessing that his role in the garden is mostly supervisory. "I don't like this upper-class white flower garden idea. If you look at the great painters, like Matisse, they use the colours of dahlias clashing with each other."

Flowers in the round conservatory, on the garden side of the house, are a testament to this — mauve and pink fuchsias (incredibly, in full flower in January) clash with a red camellia and pink-red Christmas cactus. The white geraniums look positively subdued.

Beyond the garden proper are the areas of beechwood bought by Mr Mortimer to preserve the trees, a field of rare wild orchids, "strange butterflies and wonderful



Voyage Round My Father was filmed at the Mortimers' house

snails", and bluebells. "I found out about the orchids from a poacher, who appears a lot in *Paradise Postponed*," he says.

Apart from using the garden for parties and for children visitors,

Mr Mortimer sleeps on the lawn on hot days after the day's work is complete. He gets up at 4am, "then I bath, breakfast and do all sort of things to avoid writing. I stop writing at noon, every day, even

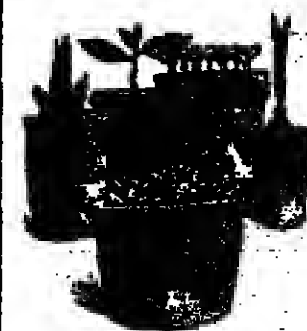
Christmas. I'm writing a novel about a New Labour MP, a very sticky character, set in *Paradise Postponed* country." Is he getting at the party he once espoused? "It's embarrassing for me to live under a Government which you have thoroughly approved of and then find you do not agree with," he says.

"There is a quote I've used in my current novel which says 'All governments of any period provide comedy for the discerning mind' and I agree. Anyway, I don't want to preach about that. I just want to write about it."

Tony Blair is no longer a close friend, but Neil Kinnock remains one, and regularly stays with the Mortimers — entertaining everyone in the party with his renditions of Elvis Presley numbers — when they rent a place in Tuscany.

JANE OWEN

● The paperback edition of *Felix in the Underworld* by John Mortimer was published last month by Penguin, £6.99.



■ Prune the butterfly bush *Buddleia davidii* hard back to a framework of older wood at 20-40ft. Shoots will already be starting to grow, both low down in the bush on older wood, and at the ends of the branches. Cut back to the size you require, even if it leaves the plant leafless.

■ Complete the planting of new raspberry canes, putting them in shallowly 16in apart, with 6ft between the rows. Cut them down to 9in. A generous mulch of old compost will suppress weeds and reduce the need for vigorous hoeing between the rows, which can induce sucker formation.

■ Established raspberries will benefit from feeding now to ensure strong canes for next year. Sulphate of ammonia is a cheap source of artificial nitrogen, and half an ounce to the square yard will give the plants a lift. Sulphate of potash, applied at the same rate, is also beneficial for fruit production on this year's canes.

■ In more sheltered and well-drained soils, begin outdoor sowings *in situ* of broad beans, early carrots, parsnips, summer spinach and ruby chard.

■ Pots of narcissi or hyacinths can be stood in a light, cool place to die down, or be planted in the garden.



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A new crop of volunteers is transforming Britain's gardens. Sue Corbett meets them

Voluntary gardening these days means more than country house-party guests working off the effects of city indulgence.

"Town people are always good at slashing and burning," says David Edwards, who gardens at Olivers, near Colchester, Essex. "They love it because they cannot light a fire in their London gardens. But the danger is that some of your friends are not much more competent than 12-year-olds, and that can take some managing."

But the new breed of voluntary garden helper does inspire confidence. At the University of Bristol Botanical Garden, superintendent Nicholas Wray works closely with a team of volunteers, some of them retired, but many much younger, seeking work experience. "They not only have an interest in gardening but good plant knowledge, so we can place them in areas where they advise visitors on the culture of the plants," he says. "It's not sufficient to have many pairs of willing hands. They have to be self-motivated and prepared to do the work. This garden covers five-and-a-half acres and some of the borders are bigger than most people's back gardens. So, on any one afternoon, all a volunteer may do is weed one plot. But if they come for a period of time they get a good range of jobs — and maybe some plum ones."

For some volunteers, this sort of work is just a beginning. If volunteers have been

Many hands, light work

unemployed for some time, Mr Wray can reduce their fees at the garden's night school. "We've had three volunteers in the past three years who've not only successfully completed our night school but gone on to gain places at college and are now in full-time employment in gardens," Mr Wray says.

Wendy Brewin, who co-ordinates the voluntary help at the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, holds out hope of similar career prospects. Three of the volunteers who have been helping to restore Heligan's fine old gardens since day one are now on the paid staff. "They've become Heliganites, part and parcel of the gardens," she says. "And as they have been seen on television, working here, they even have to sign autographs for visitors."

Those who can be on-site for a week or more are given as much variety as possible, and may even find themselves collecting and laying manure

for the famous pineapples in Heligan's hot mature beds.

Heligan taps every available source of volunteers — from the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, which has been clearing a Georgian ride of fallen trees and branches, to children on work experience from local schools and university students on middle-year placements.

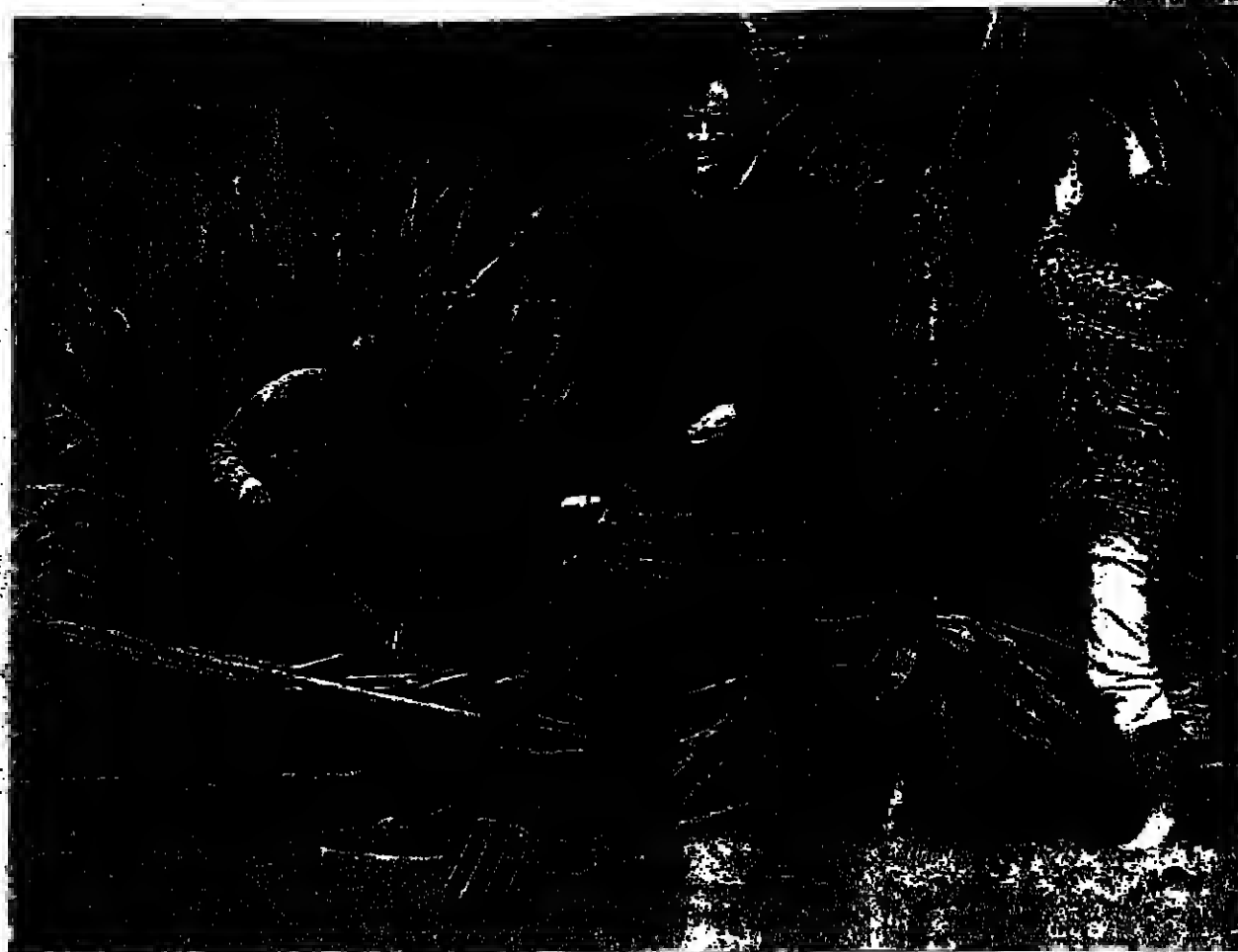
Another garden that rivals Heligan for this sort of initiative is John Michael Kennaway's 1,200-acre estate at Escot, Ottery St Mary, where the star volunteer, known to everyone as "Mrs P" and describing herself as a "very senior citizen," takes charge of weeding Mr Kennaway's four herbaraceous borders, despite having a large garden of her own. "She volunteered out of the blue," says the delighted Mr Kennaway, "and comes once a week from Easter."

"I love it," says Mrs P. "Part of the attraction is the beauty of the place, and the fact that whole families come here. And it is interesting when other keen gardeners come round as we learn from each other. There is a nucleus of people who have a wonderful lack of materialism." Perhaps it is something in the Devon air. If people don't volunteer, Mr Kennaway is not too shy to ask. When "Swampy" and friends set themselves up in his park just over a year ago in the protest against the Exeter to Hoxton A30 dual-carriageway now being carved through the middle of the estate, Mr Kennaway asked them if they would help him plant 1,000 native English hardwoods — beeches, oaks and chestnuts. They said: "Yes, certainly, as long as you show us which way is up." I thought they were joking but they weren't.

Keen gardeners who are members of the Friends of Escot also look after the estate's parkland, tackling anything from laying paths to restoring ice ponds and an icehouse.

Such is the public enthusiasm for getting involved in other people's gardens that a National Trust head gardener, Richard Ayres, has organised two hands-on master classes at Anglesey Abbey, Cambridgeshire. On Thursday, April 2, at 6pm, herbaceous borders are the topic. "And I shall have tools there for anyone who wants to have a go at planting or dividing," says Mr Ayres.

On occasion I have put up a notice inviting help with deadheading rhododendrons, but the only response I've ever had was: 'I'd love to do it but I live in Lancashire.' If anyone more local presented themselves I would be delighted."



Nicholas Wray with volunteer gardeners at the University of Bristol Botanical Garden. "People have to be self-motivated"

● David Edwards, Olivers, Olivers Lane, Colchester, Essex CO2 0PL
● University Botanical Garden, North Road, Bristol BS8 3PF (0117-403 3002)
● British Trust for Conservation Volunteers, 30 St Mary's Street, Wellingford, Oxon OX10 0EU (0491 507064)
● Lost Gardens of Heligan, Penzance, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6EN (01726 84457)
● John Michael Kennaway, Escot, Ottery St Mary, Devon EX1 1LU (01404 822389)
● James Smart, Marwood Hill, Barnstaple, Devon EX11 4EB (01271 342528)
● Richard Ayres's master classes, Tickets, price £5, from the National Trust, Anglesey Abbey, Lode, Cambridge CB3 0ET (0223 812103)

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When baby cries, read all about it

Emma Mahony selects her favourites from the numerous mother-and-baby books

My parents had it easy. If they had a problem with their baby in the 1960s, all they did was reach for Dr Benjamin Spock. On his advice we were left to cry ourselves to sleep at night, scream the place down before our next four-hour feed, and kept in quiet nurseries to avoid "over-stimulation". What is now diagnosed as colic in the early evening was then known as the baby's "crying time", and the longed-for early smiles were called "wind".

We modern mothers are victims of information overload. Conflicting advice is flung at us from every direction — check out the mother-and-baby section in any bookshop and you will find it growing under the weight of self-proclaimed experts in the field of motherhood. Flick through the manuals and one will tell you never to have your child in bed with you, while another threatens lifelong estrangement if you do not. Let the baby tell you when it is hungry, says one guide. Feed them at set times only, says another; smack the baby if it is naughty, never hit your child; at six months babies are quite able to recognise simple words, do not even attempt to teach your child to read before the age of three. Whatever you do you are going to be wrong.

Many of the recent generation of children were brought up on Penelope Leach's *Baby and Child*. Written for the stay-at-home mother, it is full of smug solutions such as this one for separation anxiety: "It is amazing how much one can accomplish with a baby on one's hip: indeed, the author became so accustomed to this way of life that she became convinced she had mislaid a child and started a frantic search before discovering that he was, and all along had been, in that accustomed position." I have tried this one; it does not work.

Her new updated version, *The New Penelope Leach — Your Baby and Child*, loses none of her know-it-all advice but does at least recognise working parents, even if she still does like to keep them in their place. When one mother despairs of "comforting a baby who keeps crying, entertaining one who can neither sleep nor read a book", Leach wastes no time in telling the mother: "If you really didn't try to meet newborn needs as best you can — by delegation if not in person — you'd have reason to feel guilty. This is your child, after all; you're responsible for her and she's dependent on you." So there.

For a different approach — mother rather than baby-oriented — Sheila Kitzinger, the other high priestess of babyhood, has written *The Year After Childbirth: surviving the first year of motherhood*. If you can turn a blind eye to the

FACT FILE



■ *The Girlfriend's Guide to Pregnancy* by Vicki Ivin (Bloomsbury, £14.99). The only funny book on pregnancy ever written. ★★ ★★

■ *What to Expect — the first year* (Simon and Schuster, £12.99). Excellent reference with a clear month-by-month layout. ★★ ★★

■ *The New Penelope Leach: Your Baby and Child* (Penguin, £15.99). Baby-oriented and a bit smug. ★★ ★

■ *Sheila Kitzinger: The Year after Childbirth* (OUP, £9.99). Mother-oriented and easy to read. ★★ ★

■ *Dr Miriam Stoppard: Complete Baby and Child Care* (Dorling Kindersley, £16.99). Best for health, worst for layout. ★★

■ *How Not to Be a Perfect Mother* by Libby Purves (HarperCollins, £5.99). Witty, anecdotal and sympathetic to the working mother. ★★

■ *The NCT book of Pregnancy, Birth & Parenthood* (OUP, £10.99). Technical and worthy. ★

■ *Natural Childbirth: A Practical Guide to the first seven years* (Gala, £14.99). Interesting intellectual theories in an inoperable style. ★

■ *The Complete Book of Pregnancy and Baby Care* (Lorenz, £16.99). Pretty pictures and little else. ★

■ *Baby Signs: How to talk to your baby before your baby can talk* (Hodder & Stoughton, £9.99). An idea worthy of being published in book form.

photographs of women in labour and hurry through the pages on birth as the ultimate sexual experience, this book is sensibly written and tackles taboo subjects, such as sex after childbirth, which others tend to ignore.

Complete Baby and Child Care by Dr Miriam Stoppard rounds off Macbeth's trio of female gurus. Her information on health is good but the format lets her down. Lumping Young baby, Older baby, Toddler and Pre-school together in chapters titled "Feeding and nutrition" makes it difficult to read.



Completely booked out: Tom Yates, one year old, examines some of the conflicting advice that is offered to mothers that babies

My favourite book is *What to Expect in the First Year*, published by Simon and Schuster. During pregnancy many women buy its sister title, *What to Expect When You're Expecting*, for the month-by-month drawings of what the fetus looks like. The same format works well in the first year. Each chapter is prefaced by "What your baby may be doing" with a helpful section on "What you may be concerned about" dressed up as quotes from concerned parents (Mooch five: "My daughter has been pulling at her ear a lot. She

doesn't seem to be in any pain, but I'm worried that she might have an ear infection"). About 200 pages cover common illnesses, including psychological problems ("I'm jealous of the time my husband spends with our daughter"). If your baby wakes up with conjunctivitis, this is the book you want in the house.

If it is loony books you want, then *Baby Signs — How to talk to your baby before your baby can talk* is good for a giggle. Aimed at mothers with babies from eight to 18 months, it promises that if you flap your arms and say "birdie" every

time one flies into view, soon your baby will be flapping his own arms when a bird appears. I have been trying this in the park and have attracted a lot of puzzled looks — particularly from the baby.

There are many successful stories from veteran Baby Signers: "When Brandon was 15 months old, he and his family attended the street market in town. One of Brandon's favourite attractions was the pot-bellied pig. Because Brandon had a Baby Sign for pig (fingertips

tapping nose) he was able to talk about this animal." Er, yes.

Perhaps a man should have the last word — the prophet Khalil Gibran, quoted in *Natural Childbirth*. He says: "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself. You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make them like you."

This is a poignant message for those of us who reach for the bookshelf when things go wrong.

Travelling with baby, page 31

Put some fun on the menu

Toddlers can make wise choices, says Dr Thomas Stuttaford

ANY RECIPE book that acknowledges children are embryonic gourmets capable of distinguishing individual tastes is to be welcomed. Too often nursery food is a featureless bland mush, rich, no doubt, in protein and vitamins, but devoid of the flavours that stimulate a child's sense of smell and taste.

Children, like adults, prefer their food to be tasty and to look appetising. How often has one sat at a table where the child smeared rejected gravy-laden mashed potatoes on to clothing and around the floor, but has eaten the delicious buttered carrots and peasant from Uncle George's plate?

Children's meals, as those of adults, are not only a refuelling exercise but should be fun. As Field Marshal Montgomery determined, no good commander goes into battle unless victory is certain.

When taking on a toddler at the table, all the odds are on the child's side. They are going to win — there is no contest. But the child should not be allowed to glory in their power and manipulate the household. The wise parent never joins battle over the dinner table and any emotion about eating must be erased.

Children shouldn't be teased, harried or threatened; there should be no bribes, punishments or tricks. If the child doesn't eat, a totally dispassionate parent should whisk it away and produce something edible but different for the next meal.

Disagreements at mealtimes can mean the child will eat very little and possibly grow up malnourished as a consequence.

IT IS ONE of the ironies of late 20th-century life that malnutrition is found both in eating middle-class districts of affluent societies, as well as in depressed inner-city areas and the Third World.

Another rule of a child's diet is that no great emphasis should be placed on any particular foodstuff. We may think that yogurt, watery soups, or bubble-and-squeak is just what they need, but they may have had their eye on their parents' food.

Research over the years has shown that children, like animals, when left to themselves, pick out a diet which covers the required elements of a balanced diet and protein, and even contains the essential vitamins and other trace elements. The mixture may be strange, but it will be full of flavour.

If the adults eat, in a casual way devoid of any teaching intent, meat, fish, beans, peas and fresh fruit, it is quite likely that their children will copy them.

These are the types of food children should be encouraged to eat. It is hard to guess which children will have an inborn sophisticated taste in food — so let them decide, even if they want to put tomato ketchup on the ice-cream.

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Children will eat healthy — and tasty — food, as an inventive cookbook writer has proved

It doesn't always have to be fish fingers

Children's tea-time is not a problem in Annabel Karmel's house. While most of us reach for the fish fingers or chicken nuggets, Ms Karmel's children will be sampling salmon with creamy chive sauce followed by baked apples and raisins for pudding — two of the many recipes in her book, *The Complete Baby and Toddler Meal Planner*. Ms Karmel has become to children's food what Delia Smith is to dinner party menus and Jane Asher to party cakes. With sales of more than a million worldwide, she is in second place in *The Sunday Times* top ten cookbooks list.

So it is that I find myself in the immaculate kitchen of her St John's Wood home, in north London, where she has offered to cook me lunch. We start with a salad and a bright red dressing called "Dressing for Dinner" made of rice wine vinegar, soy sauce, fresh ginger root, chopped celery and tomato puree. It is one of her daughter's favourites and embodies all the ingredients that explain her success. It is healthy, it looks and tastes good and it can be made in large quantities and kept in the fridge. It is also quick to put together. "As a mother of three I know you can't spend hours in the kitchen," she says. "None of my recipes takes more than half an hour."

She admits to being obsessed with food now, but it was not always so. Trained as a harpist, it was only after the tragic death of her first child, Natasha, that she decided to rethink her life. "Natasha was diagnosed with a rare brain disease called encephalitis at three months," she says. Five days later she died in Ms



Table talk: Annabel Karmel with her children Nicholas, left, Lara and Scarlett

Karmel's arms. "It's the most terrible thing to be a mother, and then not to be a mother." Eleven months later she gave birth to Nicholas and decided she could not combine the life of a musician — being away in the evenings and at weekends — with that of a mother. "Nicholas was an incredibly fussy eater," she remembers. "He would eat only pasta, fruit and ice-cream. After Natasha's death,

I was really worried that he wasn't getting the right things to help him fight infections. But there was nothing out there to help. The healthy food guides were disgusting, and the party food was too fancy. I wanted everyday food for my children."

As we tuck in to "Stir Fry for Small Fry" for the main course (a chicken stir-fry with baby sweet corn, beansprouts and soy and oyster sauce), she tells

me how some children "look at Chinese food in horror". This leads neatly to one of her main rules: get them young. She says most children like black and green olives if fed them early enough. The trick is "not to feed them too much packaged and bottled foods, because it will always taste the same. Heinz tomato soup never varies in flavour, but a real tomato soup will always taste different because of the

HEALTHY FOODS

■ To absorb iron found in red meat, lentils, egg yolks, spinach and wholegrain cereals, the child needs to eat fruit or drink juice with vitamin C at the same time.

■ Introduce a wide range of flavours before the age of three.

■ Do not feed low-fat yoghurts or milk to children.

■ Meals are not a battleground. If the child has not finished in 20 minutes, take the food away. If you say "No dinner, no ice-cream" do not give in.

■ Combine foods the baby is not keen on with foods he is. Try broccoli and pear.

■ For older children, blend vegetables they do not like into a pasta sauce where they cannot pick them out. If they do not eat fruit, make it into ice-lollies.

■ It is the frequency of eating sugar, rather than the amount of sugar eaten, that rots the teeth. Better to give sweets at the end of a meal. Pure fruit juices and raisins are among the worst candidates.

banana and avocado, chicken and pear.

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natural ingredients." Try to encourage this diversity of tastes before the age of three.

Ms Karmel has also pioneered some short cuts for those too busy to be boiling carrots and broccoli all day. The most famous is the ice-cube trick. This involves preparing more food than you need, tipping it into ice-cube trays, freezing it, and then crushing out cubes of, say, "Creamy Lettuce and Potato Soup" when you need it.

"There is a great misconception about frozen food, which is often frozen two hours after it is picked. Now you compare that to food that has been sitting on the shelf for a while and you can see that frozen food can actually be better than fresh." She hopes one day to bring out a range of frozen foods to prove her point.

As we finish with that ultimate nursery food, "Louise's Apple and Blackberry Pudding" (the blackberries are frozen, of course), I ask how she comes up with the inspiration for the 200 recipes in her new book, *Small Helpings*. "I try out everything new on 20 children and if 15 like it, it goes in. I often sit up at night thinking about food." Mothers like me who have to be taught how to make apple puree, are extremely grateful that she does.

EMMA MAHONY

● Annabel Karmel's cookbooks *Baby and Toddler Meal Planner*, *Baby and Toddler Cookbook*, *Small Helpings* and *Quick Children's Meals* are all £10.99 plus £1.50 p&p per item and can be ordered from: *Cooking for Children*, 40 Berkeley Square, London W1X 8DB or by credit card on 0171-355 4535.

'It was a painful conversation. I can take a joke about my cooking. Of course I can. But there is such a thing as Going Too Far'

Charles gets his marching orders

LIFE AND SOUL



JANE SHILLING

We nearly didn't make it to the Countryside March, my hip flask of sloe gin and I. It had been a date for ages, ever since my friend Charles rang up and said, "I'm giving the keepers a day's unpaid leave to go marching" — this is his idea of a joke — "do you want to come with us?" Not half, I said.

The Countryside Rally, which we went to last year, was as good as a play. I wouldn't miss the march for anything. "Good," said Charles. "Bring some pretty friends."

So for weeks I had been happily planning picnic baskets and wondering what to wear. And I had just settled on smoked salmon sandwiches, a pink suede miniskirt and Blahnik kitten heels when — disaster!

We had, Charles and me, the most tremendous row. This is not the first time we have had a falling out. Almost 15 years ago, I was sitting opposite him at supper when, during a lull in the conversation, he absent-mindedly picked up the sugar bowl and emptied it on my head.

There ensued some years of *froidueur*. But eventually I forgave the old thing —

he is very eccentric and peculiar — and we set off again on the best of terms. Since then, I have hardly had to speak sharply to him at all.

But then, a couple of weeks ago, he turned up with that expression on his face that means he is expecting dinner. "Come in," I said. "How lovely to see you. Lasagne all right?" "Perfect," said Charles, producing from his keeper's pocket an ink bottle of blended claret. Now, I know that he is not a great fan of my cooking — too much garlic and suspect greenery. Not enough swede. He shares this view with Alexander who, offered anything more ambitious than chicken dinosaurs or Thomas pasta shapes, pokes at it disgustedly and says (without even tasting it, which is what kills me about the whole performance): "Too stinky. Too revolting. Take it away."

Still, lasagne seemed a safe enough bet — shepherd's pie by other means, really. So I got cracking with Elizabeth David's *ragù bolognese*, while Charles settled

down in front of *Noel's House Party*. Some time later... "What's that?" said Charles, spitting out a chicken liver. "Don't do that, please," I said, my smacking hand itching. "It's chicken liver. It is canonical. Elizabeth David says so. Think yourself lucky I didn't put in ovarine, the unlaid eggs found inside the hen, especially in spring, when the hens are laying — bet you know all about those, Charlie."

A painful conversation followed. I can take a joke about my cooking. Of course I can. But there is such a thing as Going Too Far. A frost formed as we parted. Some days later, he rang. But it was too late. Having made the effort to clamber

on to my high horse, I couldn't see my way to coming down again in time for the Countryside March. When small children take this line, their mummies call it Cutting Off Your Nose To Spite Your Face. Once embarked upon, it is fearfully difficult to give up.

So I was sitting there, on Saturday night, feeling sorry for myself and wondering what to do next, when the phone rang. It was Katie. "So," she said. "What's the story? Where are we meeting? I'm longing to meet Charles. Is he really as mad as you say?" Oh crickey. Of course. I had invited Katie, too. My pretty friend. "Well," I said, "it's like this..."

There was a pause while we wondered what to do now. I knew what she was thinking. Katie, like me, is equally unnerved by politics and large crowds of people. Especially if they might shout slogans.

"I've never been on an actual demonstration before," said Katie, eventually. "The nearest thing was going to hear the choir at Magdalen Tower on May Morning. Still, it seems a bit pathetic not to, doesn't it? When people are coming from Northumberland and Wales and stuff."

It was the food that clinched it in the end. Keen cooks (if, in my case, unappreciated), we both, once we'd started to talk about it, found ourselves becoming quite indignant about no brains, no bone marrow, no oxtail, no beef on the bone, no raw milk. "Oh really," said Katie, starting to giggle. "We can't have become politicians, at our age, because we like foxes and foxhounds and

oxtail stew." "Whatever it takes," said I, more certainly than I felt. We seemed to have talked ourselves into it.

Early on Sunday morning I abandoned my suede miniskirt plan ("casual, waterproof dress", advised one newspaper, as though one were off to the Saturday night hop at the Nag's Head) and fell back on something lichen-coloured and enveloping. Then I broached the jar of sloe gin that I'd made two years ago. I couldn't imagine there would ever come a better moment to do it, and besides, we might need it to stiffen our nerve.

We didn't, of course, in the end. No shouting, no slogans, no baton charges, no anti-brandishing scaffolding poles. Just a jolly pep talk from a jovial policeman on a Roman-nosed chestnut gelding. "Don't surge forward, ladies and gentlemen. The people behind might think you know something. But you know nothing." And a short, congenial stroll in the sunshine.

"Well," said Katie afterwards, as we sat in the pub drinking pints of Adnams. "I feel almost as though I'd achieved something. But I'm not at all sure that I deserve to feel like that."



The will to win shows on the faces of boys during a game of mini-rugby at Kings College Junior School, Cambridge, but there are doubts about the suitability of the sport

The dangers of child's play

Mini-rugby, a game created to give children a gradual introduction to the adult game, is now a popular part of family life. But is it teaching the right lessons? And is it safe? Fred Redwood investigates

It is a noisy touchline scene from the heartland of South Wales rugby. The sky is heavy with rain and the pitch is a bog. Skewen against Bon Y Maen is the local derby fixture: feelings run deep. A centre three-quarter is injured and a chorus imploring him to return to the fray. "You're not hurt, boy!" shouts a gravelly voice. "Mark your man! Mark your man!" yells a ruddy-faced man in a Barbour.

It is a scene of no particular significance — except that the players in this gladiatorial contest are just 12 years of age.

All this aggression is a long way from the original concept of the sport being played: "mini-rugby". The game was created to give children a gradual introduction to the complicated rules of adult rugby union. An increasingly popular part of family weekend life, it is played at about 1,500 clubs throughout the country by an estimated 100,000 children. It was designed for 6-12 year olds and the emphasis is supposed to be on "fun", with play running across the field to prevent the little ones from exhausting themselves. At the youngest levels there is no tackling and passive versions of the scrum are only introduced when the players are aged 9 and the line-out when they are 11.

But by the time the children are 12 mini-rugby is similar to the real game, which many parents and games teachers think is an unsuitable sport for youngsters. Many argue that rugby is an aggressively confrontational pastime which shrouds its thuggery under a collection of "decent chap" maxims.

"Battling it out up front" and "getting your confrontation in first" are just two of the game's mottos to justify foul play which can lead to serious injury. Simon Fenn, the London Scottish forward, needed 25 stitches after allegedly having part of his ear bitten off by a Bath opponent earlier this season.



Jones was seriously injured in a Welsh club match and will never play again; his career in medicine is also now in doubt

At Skewen Park on a muddy Sunday morning things were not as vicious as that. But some of the tackling was uncompromising. The young players, wearing jerseys with

being played too competitively too soon. Mini-rugby is an excellent game, with which I am fully involved, but sometimes it is not played in the right spirit. One reason for this is that often rugby matches are not organised in the schools, so boys go to the clubs, instead, to learn the game.

"There is a danger in this. A good physical education teacher will attempt to inculcate moral and educational values through the physical application of a sport. In other words, if a boy isn't playing within the spirit of the game then he will be pulled up. But if former club players have sole responsibility for teaching youngsters rugby, then the skills may well be effectively taught, but good behaviour and sportsmanship can go by the board."

Many schools now choose to have nothing to do with coaching rugby. Some teachers maintain that a game in which success is so heavily dependent on the physical ascendancy of big children over smaller ones doesn't deserve a place on the curriculum.

Also, a new, professional, profit-oriented outlook has replaced the duffel coat-and-scarf amateur ethos. Many lovers of the game don't like it. International match tickets for a father and son used to be easily within the budget of the average man. Stand tickets for one of today's games will set you back at least £30. A hospitality package could cost you — or, more likely, your company — in the region of £700.

Top clubs have learnt their marketing from football and they too now take full advantage of their young supporters, selling them playing strips at inflated prices. In short, the "ruffians" game played by gentlemen days are over.



Fenn discovered the hard way foul play can hurt when he needed 25 stitches after part of his ear was bitten off by an opponent

serious spinal injuries every year. The most recent casualty from the senior ranks was the Wales captain, Gwyn Jones, a student doctor whose future medical career is now in doubt after he suffered a serious spinal injury in a club match between Cardiff and Swansea on December 13. He was temporarily paralysed and doctors at first thought he had broken his neck. Jones, 25, will certainly never play rugby again.

So how can mini-rugby be taught to play the game in the right spirit? Tony Reynolds, the physical education inspector for Hampshire and a rugby enthusiast, agrees with Kevin Bowring that club coaches play a vital role.

"Rugby should be taught as an exciting handling game and not as a full-blooded confrontational battle between two teams," he says. "Most of all, the game should be 'loosely' refereed, instead of from a 'letter of the law' standpoint."

"Winning and losing should not be all-important and the referee should be able to intervene during the match to offer coaching. It's difficult to do this in front of a partisan crowd but it's vital that the game is played in this kind of atmosphere."

Football has already gained an ugly reputation for its over-competitive young boys' leagues. Sunday morning kickabouts now commonly involve a "manager" berating his charges at half-time with Premier-league expletives. It is a worrying thought that mini-rugby may be going the same way.

Tony Reynolds disagrees. "The Rugby Football Union is aware of this danger and it is already working to counter it. Courses are being run for coaches and referees where the real aims of mini-rugby are stressed."

"As regards the problem of overexcited parents, many clubs will now take these people to one side and ask them to calm down or leave. There is even an RFU prize for good crowd behaviour. These initiatives should ensure that rugby maintains its traditional reputation for good sportsmanship."

They are fine sentiments — particularly welcome on a day when there is another round of Five Nations Championship matches. But whether the crowd at a Skewen against Bon Y Maen fixture will ever win a prize for good behaviour is quite another matter. And whether their 12-year-old children should be playing in such a hothouse atmosphere is a question that they should seriously be asking themselves.

And there's another thing...

SEVEN LONG DAYS: AS A BORE

I WAS immensely flattered when my Editor dared me to become a bore for a week. After all, if he'd already thought of me as a bore, he wouldn't have made such a tactless suggestion. Or would he?

Before embarking on my bore-a-thon, I studied more experienced bores in the hope of copying their technique. Few of them stood up to close scrutiny.

Steve Davies, for example, is famously uninteresting, but the way Steve has capitalised on his supposed lack of personality is anything but boring, even if snooker is tedious.

Bores tend to be pedantic and long-winded, like Tony Benn when he says things like: "Of course, they all thought Nye Bevan was mad when he became Labour's Minister for Health in 1945 and even madder when he went on to found the NHS in 1948..." But Tony is reportedly one of the few politicians to have annoyed the Queen Mother, which in my book makes him a bit of a lad.

In the end, the only truly insipid person I could think of was my old pottery teacher. As well as teaching ceramics, which is an incredibly boring subject, George was incredibly vain. He'd written a series of thin books about pottery, all generously illustrated with photos of himself at work on some awful earthenware monstrosity, or smiling next to his kiln.

George was far more interested in being a writer than teaching pottery and used to say: "I suppose it must be quite a thrill for you to be taught by a published author."

By an amazing coincidence, I too am a published author. Modelling myself on George, I set to work at once by reading selected extracts from my first novel to a taxi driver during a journey from King's Cross to Victoria. The hapless cabbie tried to put me off. "Yeah? Bet I could write a book. Fings I've seen..." I quickly silenced him by betting that he couldn't. As we parted, I said: "It must have been quite a thrill for you to give a ride to a published author." The cabbie called me "a stupid tart" and drove off at speed.



DAVID BOWKER

pets covered in Flora margarine. Sometimes, if hunger persisted, a third crumpet was deemed necessary. Then I sat in front of the television for hours with my two-year-old to watch an endless succession of Disney videos. Lunch was light, either a sandwich or soup. (Am I boring you?)

AFTER lunch I retired to my study to write something dull. Then I went for a short walk. In the evenings I watched television, ate dinner and went to bed.

After four days of this, I realised that there was no difference between my normal existence and my life-as-a-bore. This depressed me. When I accepted this challenge, I imagined that I lived life on the edge. Now I realise that I am teetering on the brink of total tedium. All I lack is the kiln.

Nonetheless, it must have been a thrill for you to read an article by a published author.





Simon Cowell has exchanged life in the City for Wildlife Aid

All things wild and wonderful

Simon Cowell was a City broker. Now he tends to injured creatures in his sanctuary, Wildlife Aid. Derwent May met him

Channel 5 viewers last night saw the first episode in a striking new 26-part series called *Wildlife SOS*. It is about a refuge in Surrey where thousands of wild creatures, from bats to fallow deer, are nursed back to health, often after terrible injuries, before being released back into the wild.

The refuge is a one-time farmhouse near Leatherhead. It is a remarkable place, run by a remarkable man. Simon Cowell, who is in his late forties, was a commodity broker in the City, but soon after he bought this farmhouse for himself and his family in 1979, he and his wife turned part of it into a small hospital for wildlife.

More and more wounded animals and birds came pouring in, so he became a part-time broker. Then in 1987 he turned his creation, now named Wildlife Aid, into a registered charity and, in 1994, he gave up the City to run it full-time, for no pay. He says it is all worthwhile for that glorious 30 seconds when he releases a healed creature back to nature.

The main hospital is in an outbuilding. Its most striking feature is the long line of cages — and what they contain.

In the first cage, there was a feral pigeon that had fallen down a

chimney into a fireplace, and flown round the room with a wing on fire. Christine Barrett, the senior supervisor, held it gently and showed me the affected area. It would be a long time before new feathers grew, but the hospital would see it through.

Next was a tawny owl who peered at me through one eye from the dusky depths of its cage. This bird had been hit by a car, it had been badly bruised, an eye had been damaged, and it had lost its sense of balance. It would be fed on dead chicks until it, too, was ready to go.

There was a hedgehog whose stomach had been ripped open by a bull terrier, but whose wound was healing.

I was told of another hedgehog whose prickles had been almost entirely stripped off by a strimmer. Two baby collared doves that had been picked up in a school playground were being fed on milk.

Perhaps the most remarkable animal was a long-eared bat that a cat had been playing with. Barrett opened a large box, inside which this tiny creature, less than three inches long (including its ears), clung to a piece of cloth. She stretched out its wing to show me that on one side it had lost half the membrane that joins the wing-bone to the leg. It had learnt to come

down to the floor of its box to eat mealworms — a surprising ability for an animal that feeds entirely on the wing — and the hospital team were confident the membrane would grow again.

Next I went out to the garden, where there is a pond, and many larger cages for bigger animals to convalesce in. A few Canada geese wandered round the pond; birds that would never be released because they were born with a malformation called "aeroplane wing", and had feathers sticking



All creatures great and small are cared for at Wildlife Aid, a refuge in Surrey. It is a voluntary concern supported by donations and subscribers worldwide



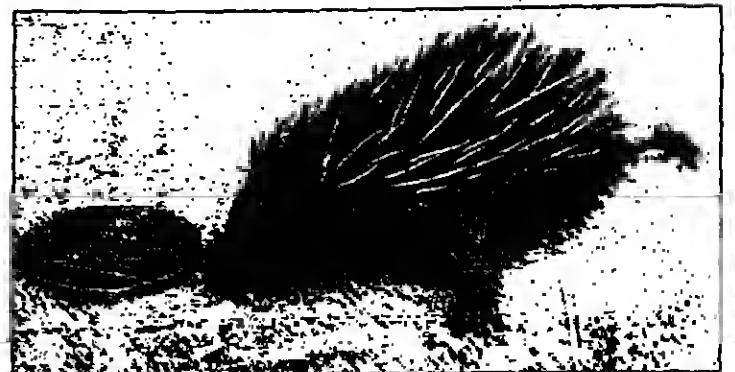
Wildlife Aid receives 15,000 distress calls a year and there are plans to build a larger centre

out from their wings on both sides. There were some orphaned fox cubs in cages here, and Cowell told me that with the main birth-season imminent there would soon be many more.

However, he had recently seen a litter of eight sheltering under a piece of wood leaning against a garage wall, and had decided to let them be. The vixen was still about and feeding them, and his policy — right, I believe —

was to leave animals in the wild if they could live naturally. Hazards and danger had to be accepted as part of life.

Also in the grounds are laboratories with X-ray and anaesthetic facilities. Three vets oversee the operations, which have a 60-70 per cent success rate. The vets give their time freely, as does Barrett, who comes in four days a week, and two other women supervisors who share the rest of the week between them.



A tiny hedgehog is among those being nursed back to health



This bat was mauled by a cat

The centre has a further 140 volunteers — and even that is not enough to tend all the victims, who may have to be fed throughout the night, or may stay for many months and need continual clearing. The centre takes distress calls day and night.

Cowell is usually on night call, and his involvement seems never-ending. He has found sponsors for the centre, successfully sought gifts of equipment from hospitals, built up a 2,000-strong, worldwide subscribing membership — and even

made the excellent films that are being shown on Channel 5. He is now planning to build a larger centre somewhere in Surrey or Sussex. With 15,000 incoming calls a year about animals in trouble, he feels a desperate need to expand.

His motives mix the concerns of conservation and welfare. Conservation, as such, would not consider it important to save a burnt feral pigeon — but for him every suffering wild creature counts.

At the same time he passionately wants future generations to be able to enjoy nature in the wild. These feelings come together in his credo: "We harm nature so much. So let us put as much back into it as we possibly can."

Wildlife Aid is doing just that, and deserves the support of everyone who marched for the countryside last weekend — whatever they were marching for.

Wildlife Aid, Randalls Farmhouse, Randalls Road, Leatherhead, Surrey KT22 6AL 01872 373332. Emergency helpline (calls 49p per minute) 0839 300132.

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CHANGING TIMES

Many young people in rural areas feel insecure, isolated and lonely, writes Fred Redwood

It's the day-dream life of the holiday-maker scanning the estate agent's windows. A stress-free, slow-motion existence in the sticks, with the children growing up well away from urban vices. Good-quality schooling, friendly locals and family walks in the countryside complete the fantasy.

But a report published this week by the Rural Development Commission, entitled *Young People in Rural Areas — Making Things Happen*, paints a very different picture of life in the countryside for teenagers.

The Commission found that lack of public transport causes enormous problems. Social and sporting amenities are often lacking, as are opportunities for further education, training and employment. A shortage of low-cost housing prevents young people from taking the first steps away from the family home, while remaining close to their roots.

Perhaps the most worrying observation was that young people in the country frequently felt insecure, isolated and lonely.

Zoe Hall, 22, spent her teenage years in Upton, Dorset, 16 miles from Swanage. Set in an area of outstanding natural beauty, with glorious beaches nearby, her adolescent years could have been blissful. Far from it.

"I disliked growing up here intensely," she says. "Lack of transport was the crux of the problem because that isolated me from friends outside the village. There was simply nothing to do. There was no swimming pool, no social club — basically, no leisure amenities of any kind."

The main form of entertainment was under-age drinking, while people living closer to Swanage often spent all their time in the amuse-

The lost generation



Toeni Longford says teenage drinking and drugs are real problems in her village

ment arcades. As a result, gambling addiction is a real problem. When I left home, finding accommodation was a nightmare because only winter-lets were available, the summer being completely given over to tourists.

"Also, the incomers to the area actively dislike young people. They complain about them continually and even had the cheek to protest when an advice centre for local teenagers was built. Jobs are difficult to find here, so most young people move away."

Zoe's problems are typical. The Commission has instigated a number of measures to make country teenagers' lives less of a struggle. In Shrewsbury, for example, a "Wheels To Work" scheme tackles transport. Unemployed 16-25-

year-olds lease mopeds to get to interviews, to take up training or to undertake intensive job searches.

It is not only older teenagers who experience problems with the rural life. Most youngsters forge lasting friendships during the first years of secondary school, but this, too, can be difficult.

James Goldstraw, 13, lives in the tiny village of Great Sheffield, Berkshire. "I see very little of my friends at school because, to visit them, my parents have to drive me on a 20-mile round trip," he says. "Then they have to do the same to bring me home."

"My leisure time consists of playing on my computer or watching TV. Sometimes I meet some of the other local

kids, but there is so little to do here that it can lead to getting into trouble. We'll go on to private land and look around buildings which we shouldn't be near. I know it's wrong, but sometimes you do these things out of sheer boredom."

Adolescents have always complained. "I'm bored" is a teenager's mantra, whether it's heard in Los Angeles or Littlewick Green. Disillusioned parents reading this may have one comforting thought: life in the sticks may be boring for teenagers, but at least they are safe there.

Unfortunately, that is not necessarily the case, either. Toeni Longford, 16, lives near Lambourn, not far from the gallops which inspired Sir John Bejeman

this, friendship groups are very important, so if you fall out with one person you can be ostracised by the whole group," she says. "This has happened to me and it was horrible. In a bigger community a disagreement wouldn't matter very much because you would have more people to mix with. But in the country, relationships are so much more intense."

There is a well-known drugs problem in Lambourn, and there is also a lot of drinking among young people. Everyone has this *Vicar of Dibley* image of the place, but you should see it at night. It's full of gangs getting 'out of it' and making trouble. I wouldn't dream of walking through Lambourn after dark.

So if life in rural areas is so unpleasant for young people, what is the answer? Toby Johns, the head of rural services at the Rural Development Commission, calls for, among other things, greater public awareness.

"It's vital that we all realise that young people in country areas need more affordable homes, decent public transport, better jobs and the chance to enjoy themselves," he says. "We are determined to give these issues a higher profile."

Fine words, but they are rather lost on Zoe Hall as she tries to decide where her future lies. "I am at an age now where I really appreciate the beauty of the Dorset countryside and the coastline," she says. "I paint a lot and in many ways I would like to settle around Swanage when I am older. But then there is the problem of children. I wouldn't bring up a teenager of my own around here. The countryside is no place for a young person."

طوبى من الامل

'Ammunition being blown up in the lavatories, mooning championships, and the start of passionate love affairs ...'

Military did my son a service

DOWN TO EARTH



LUCY PINNEY

The last time a Gulf War loomed, my eldest son decided he wanted to become a fighter pilot and bomb Iraq. Luckily, he was only nine at the time, but it meant that I had to promise to enrol him in the Air Training Corps.

Casual visitors to the countryside may not be aware of this but, at weekends and in the holidays, the aircraft you hear overhead and the tank you see rumbling in the distance could well be being piloted by enthusiastic 13-year-olds from the Cadet arm of the Services. (As there are 127,000 cadets swarming around the UK countryside, they are hard to miss.)

I've got no military background, so I don't know what to expect when my son was finally old enough to join a Cadet air squadron.

Almost at once, his character changed in a peculiar and unexpected way. He'd always been an untidy, dreamy person, but suddenly he was begging me to shave off his long hair, and spending all his free time ironing his lapels and trying to get a mirror shine on the toes of his boots. He studied photos of aircraft obsessively and was often to be seen marshalling his toddler brother into drill positions in the yard.

The squadron he was attached to seemed to go in for pleasingly bizarre activities.

Every few weeks, there'd be a night exercise, which meant that my son would have to stay out overnight until break-fast-time, returning pink with pleasure and covered in mud and a variety of prickles.

I finally discovered that he and the other cadets were spending three nights being hunted through pitch-dark woodland by their superior officers.

The prickles were there because my son had discovered that the best way to evade capture was to wear three balacava helmets at once and dive head-first into a thorn-bush. No one could bear to follow.

When I mentioned that I thought this behaviour a bit odd, a friend living in Gloucestershire told me that she'd seen her son, who was attached to the Army Cadets, trundling through Bourton-on-the-Water at midnight with a crowd of

teens carrying another cadet on a stretcher, and frequently dropping him.

Still, at least our sons never came home plastered in manure. According to the end of a night exercise the officer-in-charge liked to "cavort" the cadet who had been the most annoying and unhelpful.

Fascinating stories filtered back from summer camp, too. Along with the expected diversions such as flying a Hercules, sailing a Rustler 36, or learning how to handle a semi-automatic 303, my son and his friends were sampling some of the other, less well-advertised, delights of the military.

Heavy sleepers woke to find themselves strapped to the roof-beams of the dormitories, live rounds of ammunition were blown up in the lavatories, mooning championships were held, and passionate love-affairs begun.

One particular friend of my son who wishes to remain anonymous, fell asleep in a girl cadet's tent while camping at RAF Benson. He woke at 2am, horrified to hear a patrol approaching.

A torch beam was shone to his face as he lay in a jumble of bedding, feigning unconsciousness.

Just as he thought he was about to be court-martialled or worse, one of the

patrol remarked in a scornful tone: "Cor, what an horrible ugly bird", before moving off.

I don't mean to criticise the Cadet Services. I couldn't be more pleased that kind, volunteer adults were prepared to spend so much of their time with my son.

Charging only a nominal sum, these dedicated servicemen and women provide for teenagers — and all in a safe setting in the countryside.

And there's an added spin-off too. For someone such as my son, who has only had a state education, the Cadets has acted like an expensive Swiss finishing school.

Nowadays, he feels an unaccountable compulsion to stand to attention when he's being ticked off, to call his elders "sir" and to wear a tie whenever he goes out in the evening.

This fast habit puzzles his companions, who tend to ask rudely if he's going for a

job interview — but he's noticed that he always gets served first at the bar.

The hours spent drilling on a parade-ground have paid off handsomely, too. Apparently, they've proved the best possible training for the complexities of disco-dancing.

When I talked to a spokesman at the Ministry of Defence, he told me that roughly 26 per cent of the current intake into the Armed Forces were former cadets — but this figure mystifies my son and his friends.

One of them maintained that Cadets was more of a rite of passage than a career move, and that the only people he knew who were still dewy-eyed about the Armed Services were those who hadn't spent their teens simulating combat conditions in a remote patch of underbrush.

For me, this disenchantment is the best part of the deal. However noble it may be to lay down one's life for one's country, I'd much rather my son had a safe desk-job.

And I'm thrilled that the military — out of the goodness of its heart — has devoted so much time and effort to working him round to the same point of view.



A man of letters, Sandy Macfarlane steps ashore on Inchmurrin, an island on Loch Lomond, to deliver the mail on one of the most beautiful postal rounds in Britain

When storms stop the post

Postman Sandy Macfarlane has one of the most unusual rounds in Britain. Kevin Pilley dons his sou'wester to help with deliveries

Roy Rodgers, Tonto and the Prince of Wales are all on Sandy Macfarlane's postal round. Eight times a year, in winter and 12 in summer, he sails from the almshouse boatyard on the southern shore of Loch Lomond to deliver the Royal Mail to the islands on Britain's largest strip of inland water. His round is 23 miles long, five miles wide and about 600ft deep.

Three generations of Macfarlanes have been authorised to carry the Royal Mail on the loch. The contract has been in the family since it was awarded to Sandy's father and grandfather in 1948. "I don't know who will take it over from me as I have four daughters," says Mr Macfarlane, 32, who first went out on the mail boat when he was 12. His grandfather, Sandy Forbes, a former lorry driver, tips out.

"Nothing much has changed over the years. We deliver on Monday and Thursday in winter, and on Saturday as well from May to October. We still have the same three boats and we still have a Border collie, called Top. We had three Salis before him. That's the only thing I suppose. I have changed — the dog."

In summer, Royal Mail pinants flying, two boats are used — the 16ft Marion, built in 1938 and named after Sandy's grandfather's niece,

and the 31ft Margaret, built in 1947 and named after his grandmother. In winter, Mr Macfarlane uses the tiny Lady Jean, named after the former Duchess of Montrose. In summer, passengers pay £6 for the three-hour round trip at a maximum speed of eight knots. "It can take longer when I am on my own, depending on what hospitality I receive and who's about and wants a chat," he says. There are 38 named islands inside the loch. Inchmurrin, one and three-quarter miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide, is the largest. "Some are just swirling weeds, floating islands or underwater hazards," Mr Macfarlane says. "Prince of Wales Island is just a blip on the loch floor and is submerged most of the time. It is named after a paddle-steamer which struck it some time in the 1950s."

Inchmurrin is named after St Mirren, who built an early Christian church there. Many



Sandy Macfarlane's grandfather, Alexander, delivering the mail 50 years ago

of the islands have connections with saints and Christian missionaries. They also have been clan strongholds, refuges from mainland plagues and sites for illicit whisky distilleries.

Inchmurrin and Inchavannach were once used as drying-out places for alcoholics. Inchmurrin was planted with yew trees by Robert the Bruce for his bowmen. Larch trees grow on most of the other islands.

Inchmurrin is owned by the Scott family. After mooring the Lady Jean and stowing Kip below deck so he won't worry the cattle, Mr Macfarlane picks up the letters and walks up to one of the four homes on the island.

The Scots have 39 cattle, two tractors, a horse called Tonto, mink, enough pheasants for a syndicate shoot every summer and Broie, a Labrador. Tom Scott's father, a sheep farmer from Ayrshire, bought the island in 1940. "I don't know how much for. They gave places like this away in those days," he says.

Mr Scott met his wife, Anne, at a Young Conservatives "do"

on the mainland. They have two married sons, Dougal, a locum vet, and David, a farmer, who live with their families on the island.

Mr Scott says: "The arrival of the mail boat was always a social occasion. I can remember Sandy's dad always had a quarter-bottle of whisky with him and he used to pass out the drinks to the men. He never gave me one though."

"My father and grandfather once walked across the ice eight miles here and back to deliver mail when the loch froze over in 1963," Mr Macfarlane says. Electricity was installed in the 1940s and a hotel was built in 1961. Self-catering flats are open from April to October. Weddings are held on the island. The Scots take their water from the loch and recycle much of their rubbish.

Mary, Queen of Scots, is reputed to have stayed at Lennox Castle on Inchmurrin. The island is now the home of the Scottish Outdoors Centre.

Next stop was Inchavannach island, leased by fireman Roy Rodgers. He is not about. Neither is the anonymous tenant of Inchmurrin

The mail boat passes the Loch Lomond Golf Club which will host the Scottish Open this year. The final call is the last of the four islands inhabited all year, the privately owned Inchfad, which is about a mile long. The pier has collapsed and the caretakers, Derek and Michael Wood, come to collect their post.

An artist and a former accountant, the Woods brothers, from Nottingham, are the only Englishmen on the loch. They have been looking after Inchfad for three years. "It is mainly dealing with the thousands of moles," Michael says.

The wind gets up and the rain comes down. The strongest winds Mr Macfarlane has encountered have blown at force seven or eight. The mail run has been cancelled a few times in winter, but only once in summer in 50 years.

George Johnson, who has just retired after sharing the postal duties for 15 years, once fell overboard and was in the water for 15 minutes before being rescued.

On his way back, Mr Macfarlane sees that the tide has put his sorting office 1ft underwater. He shrugs and, looking at Ben Lomond disappearing into the mist, says: "Ours must be one of the most beautiful postal rounds in the country."

Red flag that heralds the start of spring

FEATHER REPORT

A RED-RUMPED swallow was reported over Cornwall earlier this week. This bird is similar to our own swallows, except for its distinctive red-buff collar and rump. It was probably a spring migrant coming up from Africa to Spain that overshot the mark — and a forerunner of the vast army of birds that is about to land on our shores.

Among the first of these will be the chiffchaffs. In fact, there may already be some around. The earliest I have heard of a chiffchaff singing is March 12, in the warm weather of 1995, but they usually start arriving in numbers around the first day of spring, March 21.

A few chiffchaffs stay here throughout the winter, but they hardly ever seem to sing, and it is probable that all those chiffchaffs that will soon be chinking away in the trees will be genuine new arrivals.

However, some of the county bird reports that list the first recorded dates of summer visitors omit the chiffchaff (and the blackcap) because they feel the status of any individual is too uncertain.

Incidentally, there are now four chiffchaffs where there was one before. The British Ornithologists' Union has just "split" the chiffchaff into four distinct species: the Iberian chiffchaff, the Canary Islands chiffchaff, the mountain chiffchaff (found in the Caucasus and the Middle East) and our own common chiffchaff, as it is now named. However, they are only divided by very slight differences, and none of the three new ones has ever been recorded for certain in Britain. (A possible Iberian chiffchaff is under consideration.)

FOR BRITISH birdwatchers, the main problem is distinguishing the chiffchaffs from the willow warblers arriving from early April onward. When they are singing there is no problem. The willow warbler's delightful, rippling cadences are quite different from the other's leisurely "chink, chank, chink, chank".

Otherwise, the two species are very similar — both of them small, greenish-buff birds with fine bills. The chiffchaff usually has black legs; also, the chiffchaff is more white, less yellow beneath, and a bit scruffier. But how often can you see these things or be sure of them?

At any rate, it will be a good moment when the first unmistakable chiffchaff appears this year. It will probably be singing near some water where there are already plenty of insects about, breaking off frequently to chase a passing



Spring arrivals: chiffchaff

pursuit of flies. But they are soon on their way, unaccompanied by now, heading for the remaining sandpits in Britain where they can burrow the holes and bring up the young in peace.

DERWENT MA

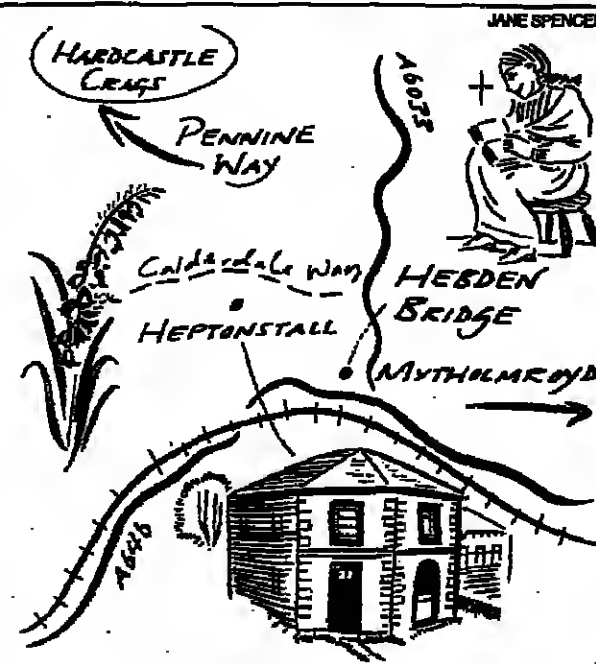
What's about: Birders — watch for country displays by pairs of misty swans. Twicken — Alpine swift, Budworth Mere, Cheshire; surf scoter, Montrose, Details from Birdline 0891 700222. Calls cost 50p a minute.

ON THE SPOT: WEST YORKSHIRE

Rural recommendations

The place: the Wesleyan Chapel, Heptonstall. The view: clumps of trees follow the route of the River Calder and beyond these lie neat fields. At the base of the hill is an old textile works and on the left sits Old Town Mill. Afternoons: visitors from Britain and overseas. Historical interest: this pilgrimage site is the oldest Methodist chapel in the world to have been in continuous use since its construction in 1764. The octagonal design, fashionable at the time, was chosen so as not to conflict with the established Church. It is named after John Wesley, who laid the foundation stone. OS ref: 986/231 on sheet 103. How to get there: take A666 from Halifax to Hebden Bridge then walk up the steep, cobbled footpath for half a mile. Time to visit: early spring to combine a visit to the Bluebell Woods at Hardcastle Crags. Also nearby: 16th-century Hebden Bridge and excellent walking along the Pennine Way and Calderdale Way. Mytholmroyd, the hometown of the writer and poet Laureate Ted Hughes is three miles east.

DEBORAH KING



coffee with the Scott family provides a welcome break

No business like dogshow business

Crufts is not all wagging tails and smiles. Carol Price goes backstage at the world's most popular pooch show

As Crufts reaches its climax at the NEC today and tomorrow, there cannot be a car park or hotel bathroom in Birmingham where hair-brushes aren't being feverishly scraped through canine coats. Hundreds of nervous owners will be reaching for the mists, shampoo, tea tree oil, clippers, and natty hair-dividing devices called "crackers", which turn your dog into a canine Hilda Ogden.

Although the top prize money is only £100 for Best in Show, competition is enormous. Every year the show attracts more dogs and exhibitors: today, just producing a dog good enough to qualify is a tall order and much harder than most pet owners might imagine.

First, you have to secure a pup with show-winning potential — in terms of looks and temperament — which only 5 to 10 per cent of all pedigree dogs possess.

Once you have found such a dog, the hard grind and the motorway driving begins. The next year may be spent traversing the British Isles to notch up that vital first, second or third placing at a national championship show — the dog-owner's passport to Crufts.

There are no guarantees at the shows, even if the dog is a top pedigree. At many shows, owners come away empty-handed, having spent hours of mind-numbing tedium waiting around the "benches" — or ringside kennel compartments — before they get to glimpse their judge. Boredom, nervous anticipation, elation, despair — no current Crufts qualifier will have avoided the mental rollercoaster.

The Robinson family, who this week travelled to the show from their home in Newton Abbey, Ireland, have done it all before. Alan Robinson and his wife, Deirdre, show bearded collies; today their eyes will be fixed on their daughter, Clare, who at the age of ten is one of Crufts' youngest ever handlers/qualifiers. She will be taking her Lhasa Apso, Molly, into the ring and admits to being "extremely nervous", despite the extensive preparation she has put in.

If Clare is one of the youngest Crufts exhibitors, then 82-



A last-minute spot of glossy coat grooming for one hopeful competitor (left); and a trolley ride allows another set of Crufts contestants to save their strength for the big show



Say cheese: snap happy Strapper sets up a group shot

year-old Molly Castle has to be one of the most seasoned. A breeder of more than 50 King Charles spaniel champions, Mrs Castle, from Huddersfield, has defied injury — a bad knee resulting from a hip operation — to bring her two star bitches to the NEC.

"Unfortunately," she says, "my dogs won't show for anyone else, so I'm going to have to hobble round that ring if it kills me."

Mrs Castle has been to every Crufts since 1943 — "except for the one in 1949, which was cancelled by an electricians' strike" — and says that, along with many of her generation, she regrets the passing of "the good old days when the show was much

more casual and intimate. Now it's all rush and push and so much more commercial."

Exhibitors, too, are growing increasingly competitive, each seeking that new wonder product — be it aloe vera juice, green-tipped mussels, shark's cartilage, probiotic tonic, or any state-of-the-art miracle diet/grooming aid that might boost a dog's show-ring allure.

Owners may spend millions every year on dog products, but according to Brian Leonard of the Kennel Club, not even a miracle cure can turn a so-so dog into a champion.

"It just has to have a natural star quality in the ring," he says. "Nothing else will do it." Last year's supreme Crufts champion, the Yorkshire terrier Oanillon Mystification, seemed to back up his theory

— the winner's diet was amply supplemented with packets of crisps, digestive biscuits and Marks & Spencer roast chicken thighs, with no apparent ill-effects.

Today's Crufts is no longer a simple dog show, but a four-day spectacular where traditional breed exhibitors can be swamped by hundreds of trade stands and displays of dogs doing everything from herding ducks to hanging off the shoulders of motor-cycling policemen. Worldwide, it has become

famous for its prestige, glamour, diversity — and the length of queues at its lavatories. Dogs seem well catered for in this area.

But Beverley Cuddy, publisher of *Dogs Today*, thinks human needs are notoriously less well met. If you are thinking of setting up a service at Crufts, she says, forget selling fancy collars and shark's cartilage for the dogs. "If you were to develop a stand at Crufts which was just toilets for humans, you'd be set to make a fortune."



Well trained: the clicker

One click and he'll be a good boy

Do not despair if your dog is a disobedient rascal — a new method has arrived from the United States called clicker training which has been used successfully with dolphins and performing whales. The clicker is a thin metal plate fixed at one end inside a plastic casing two inches long and one inch wide. The plate clicks when pressed down and clicks again when released. It costs about £2.50.

Among those leading the way is Sarah Whitehead, who runs sessions for puppies at her home near Windsor in Berkshire.

She says that an eight-week-old puppy, previously only any good at unravelling toilet rolls, will be coming to heel, sitting and staying within the first hour of her course. Five one-hour sessions over five weeks cost £40.

Animals are trained by clicking and treating. Give the dog its favourite treat and press the clicker. It soon learns that responding to the clicks brings home the goodies. Owners gain obedience based on trust and affection, rather than force and compulsion.

Ms Whitehead has clicker-trained her

own seven-month-old golden retriever, Windsor, who now shows off at her regular classes. He opens and closes doors, loads and unloads the washing machine. "But he can't do the ironing yet," she says. "We're working on that."

JACK CROSSLEY

For information on courses, send an SAE to the Association for Pet Dog Trainers, Pembrook Farm, Northchapel, Penworth, West Sussex GU28 0JB. For videos and books, contact Stephen King at Crosskeys Books (0181-590 3604).



Obediently yours: clicker dog

JAMES ALLCOCK
Write to The Times Vet, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9AN. Advice is offered without legal responsibility.

A VET WRITES
Last year you wrote about veterinary training and gave an address to write to for further information. We've lost it. Can you help?

The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, Belgrave House, 62-64 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 2AF, will help — and appreciate a large stamped addressed envelope. Six universities award a degree in Veterinary Science or Medicine: Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and London. Write to the registrar of each for details of their veterinary school.

Freckles, our cocker spaniel bitch, is booked in for spaying next month when she will be 11 months old. I'm told this operation involves removing her ovaries and uterus. Why not simply tie the tubes, as in human sterilisation? Will she need hormone replacement therapy and will she get fat?

Tying the fallopian tubes will prevent conception, but she won't be neutered. While the ovaries remain, Freckles will come into season every 18 months, with all the usual complications. A false pregnancy will occur eight weeks after heat because her ovaries continue to make the hormones controlling this. Ad many unsprayed bitches develop pyometritis — a serious infection of the uterus — in middle age. If the uterus is there, pyometritis can't happen. If you overfeed Freckles she'll get fat, but guide dogs are spayed and castrated, and most have trim figures.

Have you any advice about introducing two kittens to our dog — the respects cats — and Daisy, a 13-year-old feline who respects nobody. Daisy's brother, Tom, disappeared three years ago and since then Daisy has been very demanding. We don't want to upset her, but we would like to start the next generation of cats now. Or should we wait till Daisy goes?

Daisy won't feel threatened by a pair of young kittens. If the youngsters resume to get too familiar, there will be spits and spats for the first fortnight and later, at Daisy will make sure her remains "top cat". A 2ft square wooden box with a lid and a kitten-sized entrance hole makes an excellent safe-haven for the babies. Feed all the cats at opposite sides of the same room so they get used to feeding together. Daisy'll almost certainly take on a new lease of life when she's couple of lively youngsters keep up with — and keep on order.

CRUFTS BY NUMBERS

- Crufts, now in its 108th year, will cost the Kennel Club £2.3 million to set up and run.
- 20,892 pedigree dogs and 3,000 crossbreeds will be taking part. Some 100,000 human visitors are expected.
- Golden retrievers are the biggest single breed entry (534) followed by Labrador (524); the lowest are Hungarian Kuvacs (5).
- There are 130 judges aided by 350 stewards.
- To accommodate the impact of 350,000 sets of paws and human feet, the NEC floor has to be covered in special carpet tiles.
- An estimated 750lb of dog hair and 1,500lb of doggy waste will have to be cleared during the show.
- TV coverage of Crufts '98 starts tonight on BBC2 (5.40pm).
- For tickets call the NEC box office on 0121-767 4850.

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AUNTIE (left) is a 14-year-old tortoiseshell cat with an affectionate nature. The tips of her ears are missing, due to a medical condition, but she is in good health and needs a loving home with an understanding and patient owner.

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مكتبة من الامم

Final cut for the Broadway Barber

Barry Wigmore
(with apologies to
Damon Runyon)
meets the man
who snipped the
stars for 50 years

One day there arrives in this man's town an English guy with a little attaché case full of scissors, razors and combs, and he moves in to work at a barber shop on Broadway up near 103rd Street. This guy is called Kay Demetriou because his parents came from Greece. But he was born and raised in Soho, London, and is as English as roast beef in a refined kind of way, although even today, after 50 years in New York City, he still talks with a touch of a Mediterranean accent.

Now this is the time of the Roaring Forties when Broadway is the centre of the universe and the guys and dolls who live and work there consider someone from London to have class, especially when he has a little David Niven mustache and an accent. Because he has a very nice tale to tell about the British aristocracy, and the Duke of Windsor and Mrs Simpson, Mr Kay and his barber shop are soon more than somewhat busy.

For 50 years Mr Kay flourishes and prospers, and in that time all manner of citizens, from princes and presidents to gangsters and gunmen — and, of course, many actors, who are somewhere in between — pass through his shop. He sees action outside as well, like the occasional death, from lead poisoning, which sometimes happens in this town.

In fact the Broadway Barber becomes an institution. Eleven books about characters of the city get to mention him, and citizens come from all over for a haircut and a shoeshine in his shop. So when he finally decides to hang up his scissors, just about all of New York wants to say goodbye.

The Mayor, Rudolph Giuliani, who will attend the opening of a can of beans to get his picture in the newspapers, goes to a party with 1,000 other people and gives Mr Kay an illuminated address, thanking him for his contribution to the city's rich and colourful history.

Mr Kay then makes himself even more popular when he announces that he is donating the contents of his shop to the city museum. As the shop has remained unchanged since it was built in 1907, it has the original reclining leather chairs, the copper tub for hot towels, 600 razors in display cases, and wondrous old bottles for oils and lotions along its marble shelves plus the striped barber's pole outside, this has the museum curator very excited.

In fact he is so excited that the Museum of the City of New York is now rebuilding an entire floor so that it can put the shop on show as a permanent exhibition.

It is just the old store that citizens find so exciting, however, is all the old stories that go with it. And now Mr Kay sits in a wooden chair in his apartment 25 floors above New York. He is nearly 80 years old with big brown eyes and a soft voice, but his memories are as sharp as his razors and he tells his story as follows.

The shop was started by an Italian immigrant (says Mr Kay). After ten years, when this guy has a sizeable roll, he sells up and goes home to the land of spaghetti. The guy who buys it is a gambler, and every night he pulls the blinds and shoots chips with his employees. Unfortunately, he is not such a good craps player and one night he loses the shop on the roll of the dice to one of his barbers.

Soon after, along comes Mr Kay, fresh off the American Airlines flight from London, which has had to stop twice on the way in Greenland and the way in Newfoundland, because they did not have big jets to cross the Atlantic in those days. Mr Kay does well in the shop that he becomes a partner, and later he buys the joint.

In this area at this time, citizens like Humphrey Bogart, George Raft and James Cagney, who were born hereabouts, are struggling to scratch a living as hoodlums and actors of the stage, and of course they all come in for a shave and a short back and sides.

Raft goes on to become a famous movie star, then blows all his money and gets barred from Britain because of his friendship with some very disreputable members of the Mob. By at this time he is teaching James to dance the



Above: Mr Kay gives a loyal customer a last cut; left: the tools of his trade; Right: New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani organised a grand send-off



Reynolds: easy guy



tango in a dance hall on 168th Street and Broadway, which makes him very popular. Years later, Mr Kay remembers, Malcolm X gets shot nearby.

"Bogart was a good friend," says Mr Kay, "and then Cagney. He was a little guy, skinny, then he became fatter. Humphrey was born round the corner from me, at 245 West 104th Street. His father was a physician, a doctor, his mother was an artist, a painter. After he became an actor and went to Hollywood, he would always stop in for a haircut when he was back here."

"That big movie that made him, *Casablanca*, it was intended originally for George Raft, but he didn't like it, so Bogart took it and was made. He always laughed about that. He called me Kay, I called him Humphrey. He told his friends about my shop and they would come in for a cut as well."

Then one day Yul Brynner walks into Mr Kay's shop. He is not a star at this time, mainly because he still has hair. "Yul was married to a beautiful English actress, Virginia Gilmore," says Mr Kay. "They were living at 444 Central Park West, roughly three blocks away from me, and had one son, so she brought the kid, who was about two, in for a haircut."

"That was in 1948 and that's how I got to know Yul. I knew him as a friend. Then one day he comes in and says he is going to make a film, *The King and I*, and he wants a different look. What will he look like shaved, he asks."

"Good," I say. He didn't have thick hair. The front was thin. He had enough to comb and look good, but he also had a perfectly shaped skull. I cut his hair very short, put a hot towel on his head to soften the hair, then lathered it and shaved it with a cutthroat

razor. He was delighted when he saw himself. He looked better with his head shaved."

Of course, in this man's town some men take hair off, but many more want it put on. Burt Reynolds was one. "Burt did and didn't have hair," says Mr Kay. "He came to me one time. He was playing a detective in a New York television show called *The Hawk*, and he says to me, 'I'm losing my hair, what do you suggest? How do you like this important procedure?' I say, 'It's all right, but there's



'One day Yul asks me for a different look. What will he look like shaved, he asks. Good, I say'

no guarantee that it's going to stay, and you could lose it, and if you lose it, then it leaves your skin pitted."

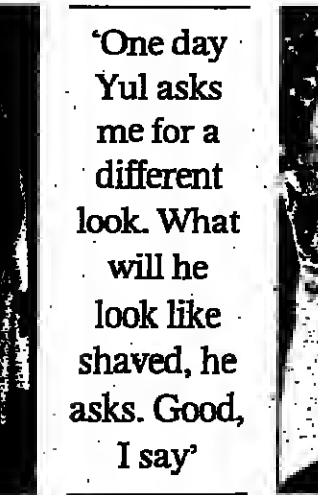
"If I lose it," he says, "I'll get a rug." That was 30 or 40 years ago. Burt Reynolds looks a sort of abrupt person, but he's not. If you know how to talk to him you can take the shoes off his feet. He comes to my apartment many times. He calls me and says, 'I need a haircut — can you do it now?' and I say, 'Sure, and he comes right on over. He is a very easy guy. I like Burt very much.'"

Because so many stars were Mr Kay's friends, it was natural that he should enter the movie business himself. Mr Kay has been the hair stylist on more films than he

can remember, including *The French Connection*; *The Godfather*; *Fort Apache*; *the Bronx* and *Die Hard*. He shaved Bruce Willis's hair for *Die Hard* but refuses to compare him with Yul Brynner.

Mr Kay has also had other famous people and politicians, including Presidents Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy visit his shop for a quick trim.

"Wonderful gentlemen," he says. "One day President Truman comes in and one of my customers says, 'Mr President, I'm next and I would be



Luciano, who is a very big cheese in gangster circles at this time. One morning Mr Kay's six barbers are called out on strike by their union, and Luciano happens by for a shave while the people are parading and picketing outside."

Luciano enters and says, "Kay, what are they doing to you? Do you want them here?" Mr Kay replies, "Their union told them what to do and they're doing it." But Lucky says, "I did not ask that. Do you want them here? Or shall

brothers in the Jewish Mafia, and they give Mr Kay an invitation he does not like, but he likes even less to refuse. "Let's go for a little walk," they say, and because he can find no excuse, Mr Kay walks with them.

Into the brothers' supermarket they go, and after approving of their cookies and crackers, Mr Kay is taken into a back office. There Mr Kay sees lots of baskets containing fruit and vegetables: apples, bananas, potatoes. "I ask them, 'Aren't you afraid of rats?'" says Mr Kay.

"Not the sort you mean," says one of the brothers, "take a look!" Mr Kay says, "I move some of the potatoes and the basket is full of \$100 bills. They are all full of money. I work it out later, I have just seen at least \$35 million."



Another mobster Mr Kay only knows as Joe stops his car outside the barber's shop one day. At this time Joe has the longest Cadillac in the United States, and therefore the world, and he invites Mr Kay into the car. Well, this makes Mr Kay very nervous indeed because Joe has a bad reputation for dirty work.

And then Mr Kay makes a big mistake. The car is so long that it has a cocktail bar and a little sink in the back with taps for running water. "I say, 'Joe, your hands get dirty so often, you have a sink in your car to wash them?'" says Mr Kay. He means it as a joke, of course, but Joe does not take it this way.

His eyes go hard. "Kay," says Joe, "I love you too much. Otherwise that remark would put you in a cement box tonight." And years later, sitting in his apartment high above New York, the Broadway Barber shakes his head at the memory of all he has seen from his shop.

"The aristocracy of America was around here," he says. "Unbelievable."



Bogart: a good friend



Cagney: local boy



Above: Modest US President Harry S. Truman patiently waited his turn for a trim

READER OFFER THE TIMES

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The Royal Opera

CHANGING TIMES

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Scottish country dancing. At Belstead House, Ipswich, Suffolk (01473 86321). From £75.

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Sing jazz. A social history of Britain's railways, 1825-1914. Making dolls' house dolls. All at the Old Rectory, Fittleworth, West Sussex (01798 865306). From £114 residential, £65 non-residential.

Blacksmithing. Craft hand-tools. Short stories. Glass engraving. Life drawing. At the West Dean College, Chichester, West Sussex (01243 811031). Price £150 residential, £97 non-residential.

Yoga. A pianist's journey through the 19th century. At the Alston Hall Residential College, Preston, Lancashire (01772 78461). Price £75 with tuition.

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Swot up on slavery and delve into the history of West Country ports at Dillington House, Somerset

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Dowsing for beginners. With the British Society of Dowsers (01233 750253). At the Hawkwood College, Stroud, Gloucestershire. Price £146 residential, £70 non-residential.

Book-keeping. Introduction to the Internet. Calligraphy for beginners. Painting - a beginning medium. At the Old Rectory, Fittleworth, West Sussex (01798 865306). From £114 residential, £90 non-residential.

Touch wood, the survival story of old superstitions. The history of parks and gardens. Dowsing. A voice workshop. At Knuston Hall, Irchester (01933 312104). Price £120 per course, inclusive.

Health and fitness. At the Priory Hotel, Weston Road, Bath (01225 331922), close to the centre of Roman and Georgian Bath, with spa, steam room, fully equipped gym, indoor pool. Price £220 for the weekend, including dinner, B&B, use of facilities.

Fresh air and fine houses. A local history weekend in Essex and Suffolk, with Peter Lawrence, at the Field Study Centre, Flatford Mill, East Bergholt (01206 298283). Price £105 residential, £82 non-residential.

Garden appreciation. Medieval art and architecture. Spring into art. Lace. At the Hill Residential College, Abergavenny (01495 333777). Price from £88-£98 inclusive.

Look out for mammals. Badgers, otters, dormice and other small mammals are the subject of this course run by the Mammal Society at the Orleton Field Centre, Pembroke (01646 661225). From £50.

Competitive chess. International folk dance from France, Germany, Sweden, Russia and Israel. Mounting

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Italian weekend. Spanish weekend. At the Brasshouse Language Centre, Sheepcote Street, Birmingham (0121 643 0114). Price £89 per course.

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A recorder weekend. Woodturning. Both at the Horncastle College, Horncastle, Lincs (01507 522449). From £87.

Dance for fitness and fun. Repairing and restoring china. Chinese seafood cookery.

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Confessions of a monk

A film based on Ampleforth shows the struggle of vocation versus temptation

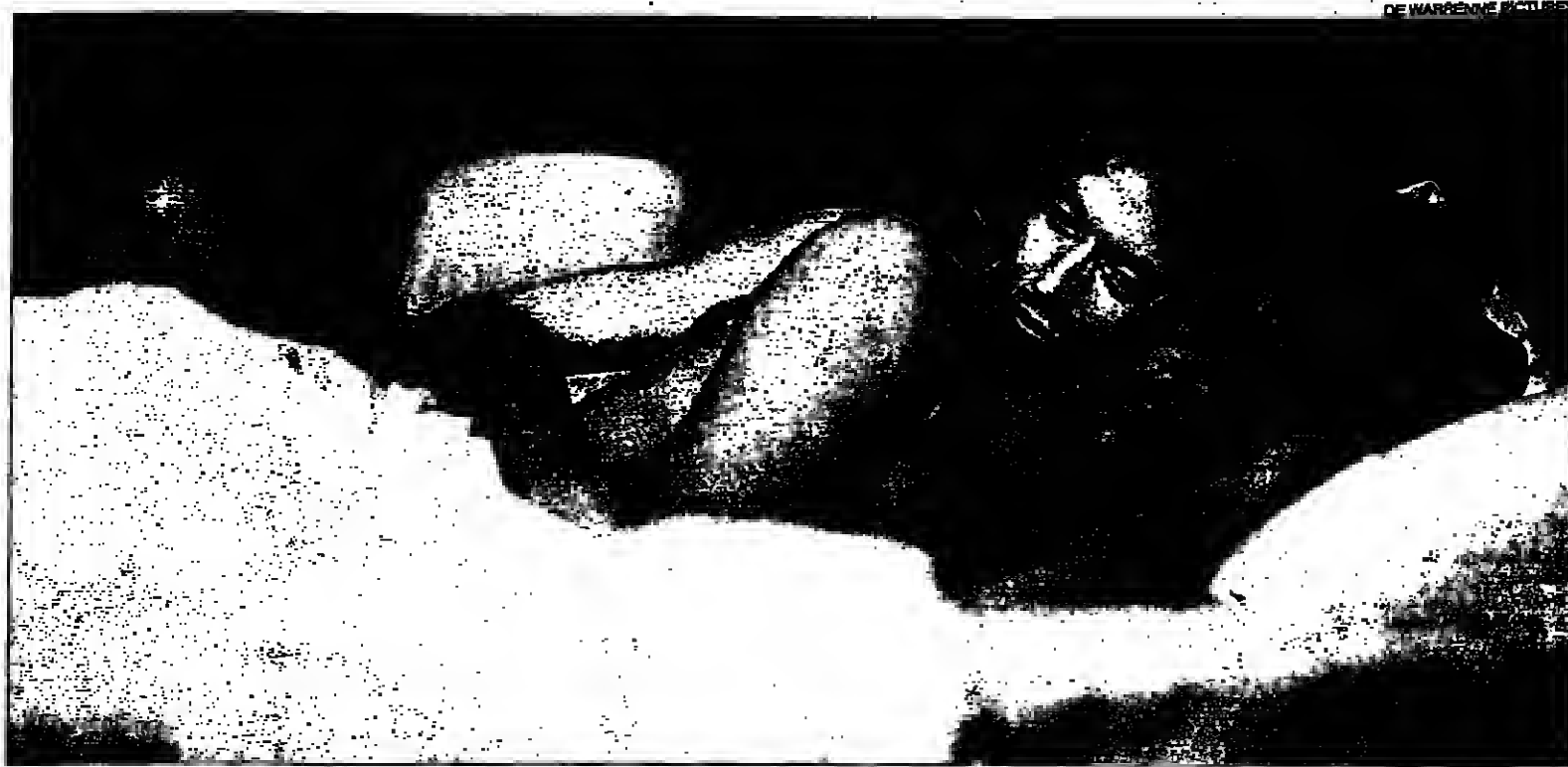
Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, will be intrigued by an invitation in early summer to a film premiere in the West End. Whether he will attend is open to question but, given time and the chance of a private viewing, he would almost certainly draw the curtains and settle down with some popcorn.

The film is low budget, British and destined for general release. It is also the talk of Ampleforth, the private Catholic school in Yorkshire where Cardinal Hume was a housemaster in the 1950s before becoming Abbot in 1963.

Monk Dawson is loosely based on the novel by the Catholic author Piers Paul Read, who wrote it after an education at Ampleforth, during the time when Cardinal Hume was a housemaster there. Much of it consists of an unflattering portrayal of life in a fictional Catholic boarding school called Kirkham in Yorkshire, showing the beatings, bullying and early homosexual passion which influence the character of the fictional pupil.

The pupil, Dawson (played by John Michie), eventually becomes a monk and then a priest in Chelsea, west London. Things start to go wrong after he is seduced by a glamorous Sloane Ranger, Jenny Stanton, who is played by Paula Hamilton, the former model from the Volkswagen advertisements.

Soon afterwards she leaves Dawson for his best friend. He has fallen in love and his tragedy unfolds as his life and ministry collapse amid the vulgar surroundings of the Chelsea fast-set. Eventually,



Lead me not into temptation: Dawson (John Michie) is seduced by Sloane Ranger Jenny Stanton (Paula Hamilton) in a scene from *Monk Dawson*

Dawson becomes a Trappist monk and the film closes with a picture of the illegitimate son he does not know exists.

Though filmed in Dorset, the producer and director Tom Waller, who is just 23 and went to Ampleforth himself, insists that the setting is Yorkshire. "They wouldn't let us film at Ampleforth because, understandably, they didn't want to be associated with a work of fiction about the school," he says. "Piers Paul Read's book was banned at the school. So it became one of those things I wanted to read."

"I don't think the film puts Ampleforth in a bad light. It is a morality tale. Celibacy is hard for any man, although the film is more than that, it is a moral tale drawn from real experience."

"It shows that the Catholic church and its rules are difficult. Some men stay, but Dawson tries to lash out at the church for being so conservative and unforgiving. These

kind of thoughts 'must go through the minds of many priests'."

Father Justin Price, who promotes vocations at Ampleforth, denies that Read's book was ever banned at the school, although he concedes that the boys were not actively encouraged to read it.

The monastery is thriving, says Father Justin, with a regular intake into the novitiate. "The book is not a portrayal of Ampleforth, it is a morality tale and as such is very good. It is certainly not a portrayal of Ampleforth as it is today. The past 30 years have seen a lot of changes," he says.

"I think *Monk Dawson* shows the search for love which takes a man through the monastic life into knowing himself better, finding his weaknesses and back to God."

Read, whose latest novel, *Knights of the Cross*, about sex and Catholicism, was pub-



Conflict in the classroom: "The film is a morality tale"

lished in paperback last Monday, is a committed Catholic. He is a lay reader at Our Lady of Victories in Kensington, West London, a governor of More House school, he is on the board of the charity Aid to

the Church in Need and is also a trustee of the Catholic Library. He did not consider entering a monastic life because he wanted to marry and to have children. But he emphasises

the importance of religion in education.

"The issues *Monk Dawson* explores are still very much alive. They concern the value of prayer, whether it makes a difference. I am in favour of the contemplative life. God can do more than we can. Catholic belief is that we can pray to God directly to influence events," he says.

"The contemplative monk or nun prays on behalf of the wider community, not just for themselves."

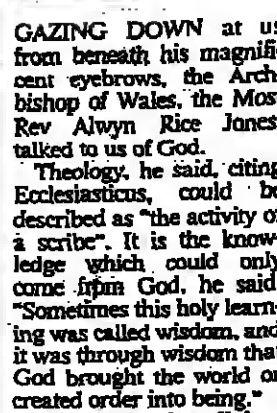
"I hope the film will make people wonder about materialism, even when it is benevolent materialism like housing the homeless."

Hamilton, also a practising Catholic, is delighted by the film and its message. "I believe religious education is incredibly important as a community-based activity," she says. "It should be delivered with a light hand and a fair heart."

RUTH GLEDHILL

A welcome on the hillside

Ruth Gledhill visits a Welsh centre for the study of theology



GAZING DOWN at us from beneath his magnificent eyebrows, the Archbishop of Wales, the Most Rev Alwyn Rice Jones, talked to us of God.

Theology, he said, citing Ecclesiasticus, could be described as "the activity of a scribe". It is the knowledge which could only come from God, he said. "Sometimes this holy learning was called wisdom, and it was through wisdom that God brought the world or created order into being."

He then broke off into Welsh which, according to the rabbi sitting near me, Dr Dan Cohn-Sherbok, a university professor, bears a remarkable resemblance to Hebrew.

Rabbi Cohn-Sherbok, who has yet to discover another Jewish person in Lampeter and has marked his recent arrival in the province by placing the Welsh flag in his front garden, was not at all put out to be at a Christian service. He read the first Bible lesson at our service, where we were celebrating the opening of a centre for the study of theology and religious studies.

The service took place in the university chapel, decked out in the red and green of the Welsh flag. Lampeter is the oldest university in England and Wales after Oxford and Cambridge, but its department of theology, religious and Islamic studies has just moved into the country's newest university building, built for £750,000 and half-funded by Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed al-Nahayan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi.

While we sang Christian hymns and prayed in the chapel, Muslims said Friday prayers in the Islamic prayer room, and Buddhists attended a seminar by Professor Sulak Siv-

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LITURGY: Readings, prayers and hymns. ★★

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Meeting
the king
of paradise
on Tonga

South Pacific - 26.27

THE TIMES

TRAVEL

Don't let
the sun
go down
without you

Eclipses - 33



A powerhouse in the making

Nigel Tisdall returns to Shanghai, one of the East's most beautiful cities, to find a Chinese Gotham City growing around its historic heart

I am shopping in the No.1 Department Store in Nanjing Lu, the John Lewis of Shanghai. "You like?" asks a smiling assistant as she holds up two shirts. One is green and tartan and the slogan reads "Gentleman-dog". The other is blue and orange and says "Child of Cavalry".

I politely decline, but later feel a rush of regret. Maybe I should buy such garments, not to wear, but as a record of the great changes now sweeping through China. In Shanghai, its largest and most go-ahead city, they are wising up so fast that such clothes, with their hilariously wrong Western slogans, will soon be a thing of the past.

In the time it will take for the Millennium Dome to be built, visited and converted into a white-elf shopping centre, this gargantuan port, once dubbed the "Whore of Asia", will have been transformed into a shimmering metropolis.

Back in 1985, when I first visited the No.1 Department Store, it was a monument to state-sponsored lethargy. Seven floors of mind-blowing inertia — yawning staff, shelves like a salvage clearance sale, prize goods hidden away in glass cases that no one had the key for...

Now the store is awash with colourful products: shiny, pink bedspreads, repro grand-father clocks, screaming karaoke machines. Computers sit next to ink brushes, calculators lie beside abacuses, exercise bikes compete with mah-jong sets.

During the past six years, the Pao of the East has become a concrete forest of cranes, building sites and

HEADING EAST: HOW TO SEE SHANGHAI

■ Getting there: Nigel Tisdall flew to Shanghai with Austrian Airlines (0171-434 7300). Flights via Vienna leave from London Heathrow twice a week, from £1,465 return in April. Keytravel (0171-267 4933) offers discounted fares.

■ Regent Holidays (0171-921 1711) arranges tailor-made holidays to China.

Prices for an eight-night package to Shanghai in April start at £1,080 including flights, transfers and seven nights' B&B at the Peace Hotel (0086 21 6321 6888). A cheaper option is the three-star Magnolia Hotel (0086 21 6502 6888), double room £40 a night. Prices based on two sharing.

■ Sightseeing: Taxis are cheap and plentiful — ask your hotel concierge to write the address down in Chinese first. Pick a clear day to visit the Oriental Pearl TV Tower and expect to queue. A visit to both viewing bubbles costs 100 yuan (about £23).

The Touring the Huangpu River Cruise also costs 100 yuan in "A" class. Boats depart from the



China girl: never seen without a mobile phone

Bound at a terminal opposite Jialing Lu — take the afternoon sailing.

■ Restaurants and bars: The Phoenix Dragon restaurant at the top of the Peace Hotel serves good Chinese food.

For a more unusual venue try Spia, the revolving restaurant in the Oriental Pearl TV Tower, and Lucky City, which squats in a former Russian Orthodox church in the French Concession (16 Gaolan Ln).

Shanghai has a growing number of ex-pat bars and clubs — for a listing see the web site <http://www.shanghai-aid.com>

■ Red tape: Visas are required for British passport holders visiting China. A single-entry tourist visa costs £25 plus £10 postage and handling — they are best obtained with the help of a tour operator. Further information from the Chinese Embassy (0891 880808).

■ Reading: Shanghai (Odyssey, £10.95); Rough Guide to China (£15.95); The Western Food Lover's Guide to Shanghai (Odyssey, £9.95).

embryonic skyscrapers, the embodiment of Deng Xiaoping's dictum that "to become wealthy is wonderful". The city where the Chinese Communist Party was founded in 1921 is charging at full speed down the capitalist highway.

So why go on holiday to a building site? Well, Shanghai is one of the world's great leviathan cities: charged with atmosphere, thick with social contrasts. It is changing at a phenomenal pace and it is a wonder to behold a brave new metropolis in the making.

The place to feel the pulse of change is on the Bund, the mile-long waterfront that stretches along the west bank of the Huangpu River. Here,

SHANGHAI FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In the 1920s, Shanghai's colonial rulers erected their pompous banks, clubs and diplomatic missions.

Now, across the silty water, another herd of flagship buildings is massing. Known as Pudong, Shanghai's east bank has become a burgeoning powerhouse of skyscrapers and financial headquarters.

Visitors can look forward to a neck-cracking array of superlatives: "The world's longest suspended bridge is in place; week is under way on the world's tallest building and highest hotel, and the largest department store in Asia. Then there is the new stock exchange, a subway line and an international airport..."

Shanghai is seized with futuristic ambition and the great symbol of its hopes is the landmark Oriental Pearl TV Tower. It rises 1,535ft above the Huangpu, a modernist kebab sporting two pink viewing bubbles, a revolving restaurant, a karaoke bar and a

bizarre 19-room Space Hotel that is set to become one of the world's hippest places in which to stay.

Waiting with the effervescent crowds that gather at its tripod-like feet, I felt I had stumbled on one of history's magic moments. There must have been a similar buzz in the air when they built the Eiffel Tower, or the Golden Gate Bridge. The 360-degree views from the tower are stupendous, but even more intoxicating is the excited chatter of the Chinese sightseers, who devour the experience with a mixture of glee and awe.

Shanghai is fortunate in having the land on which to build a second city next to its historic heart. If all goes to plan, Pudong will become a Gotham City where life is conducted by worker ants in air-conditioned cocoons. The old city has not been spared the frenzy for change and many of its colonial villas, churches and public buildings are threatened by development. Fifty years of revolutionary inertia was an excellent way to mothball Shanghai's imperialist architecture, but now the jackhammers are out in force. Even the Shanghai Club, once a bastion of the British aristocracy, is home to a branch of KFC.

It is easy to get nostalgic in Shanghai and to nurse fears about what the city is losing. I would never stay in the glitzy skyscrapers of the Portman Shanghai-la Hotel, an ex-pat palace that could be anywhere in luxury Asia, while there is still room at the art-deco Peace Hotel, built in 1929 and where Noël Coward completed *Private Lives*.

On the other hand, the new Shanghai Museum in Renmin Square is a delight. Built on four floors linked by escalators, it feels as serene and beautiful as an upmarket department store, and it is a joy to wander its marbled halls.

At times, the pace of change in Shanghai seems unacceptably brutal, as when I found myself in a taxi driven by a young hot-head who went so fast that we knocked down a cyclist. At other times it is simply comic, such as the vogue for ostentatiously flaunting mobile phones, or the disco-style dancers at the Great World Entertainment Centre, who do their best to look sexy wearing two bras and passion-killing knickers.

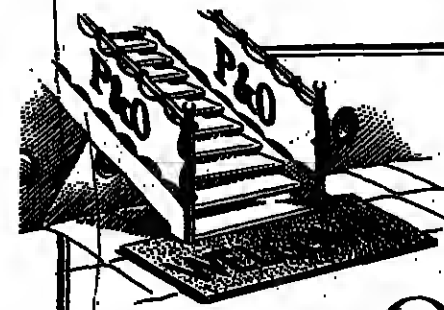
There are mellow moments, too, such as taking a seat in a wicker chair on the three-hour Touring the Huangpu River Cruise that chugs up to the mouth of the Yangtze. Tickets for this come in three classes: A-class gets you into a top-deck saloon with sky-blue armchairs, endless tea, rice cakes and a luminous-green toy car that turns into a torch.

Loudspeakers play *The Blue Danube*, and you sit in the sun watching mammoth tankers racing alongside barges strung together like sausages. On the return leg a magician performs, and when we sailed towards the Bund at sunset I sensed how exciting Shanghai must have been in the days when every traveller arrived by sea.

Before my visit I had promised to make two pilgrimages. One was to a basement boozery near the Russian Consulate that had been a favourite watering hole in 1985. Sailors



The Oriental Pearl TV Tower: "There must have been a similar buzz in the air when they built the Eiffel Tower"



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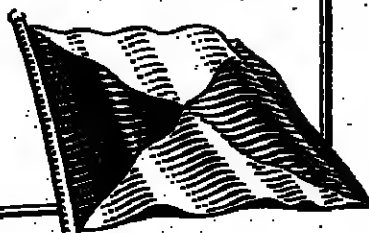
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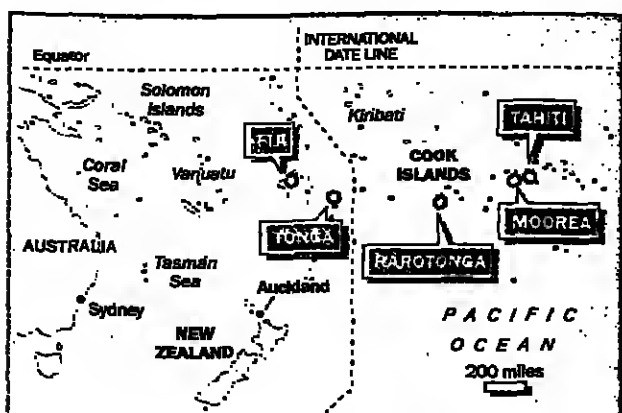
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ISLANDS OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC: TONGA

Time to buy a place in the sun

Nicole Swengley found such a warm welcome on Tonga, she was almost tempted to buy the hotel



Looking for your own personal chunk of Utopia? Fancy moving to the South Seas? Then you'll be interested to hear that Tonga's Paradise Hotel is up for sale.

Kentucky-born owner, Carter Johnson, is tired of running a hotel, even in paradise. "Oh, Vava'u is terrific," he draws. "No TV, no newspapers, no drugs, no guns. Gee, I saw a dog run over last week and told the police to put it out of its misery but they ain't got no bullets in their guns."

Carter Johnson considers his stint in paradise just another life chapter, following work on US gas lines and sheep farming in Australia. Now he hopes to head back to the States — if he can sell the hotel.

"There's too much sun here," grumbles his vanilla-skinned wife. "You can never get away from it."

The Paradise Hotel perches picturesquely above Port of Refuge harbour on Vava'u, the largest of 40-odd stunningly beautiful islands — some inhabited, some deserted — which make up the northern part of Tonga's archipelago.

Secluded anchorages and enticing inter-island waterways make the Vava'u group one of the world's prime yachting destinations, while the islands themselves remain well off the beaten track of the South Pacific's mass tourism routes.

"I used to fly guests personally by plane from Fiji. Then I crashed it. You can see the pieces in the bar," Carter Johnson gives a deep-throated Southern chortle. "Now the place is full of yachts."

The inference is clear. Boat-bums aren't interested in paying for hotel rooms. But that's to the advantage of landlubbers who prefer their paradise with hot showers and privacy.

Carter Johnson took me to supper at Ocean Breeze, a delightful restaurant run by ex-Londoner John Dale and his Tongan wife, Amelia. Over a delicious meal of fish, John said (without a hint of irony): "Tonga's got a lot more to offer than Wimbledon — white sand beaches, good food, a tropical climate."

Come the millennium, John thinks Tonga will be as popular as Tahiti. Certainly, the country is likely to attract a rash of visitors in December 1999 when it claims (as do several other islands) that it will be the first place to greet the new year thanks to its proximity to the International Date Line.

But mass tourism? That seems unlikely. For the land where time begins is also one of the most laid-back countries in the world. Tongan torpor is all-pervading. Phones don't work, buses rarely run on time, guides "forget" to meet you because of an all-important rugby practice and shopkeepers' favourite expression is "come back tomorrow."

Perhaps this relaxed attitude owes something to the fact that Tonga is the only South Pacific country never to have been colonised. This independence has kept the culture intact and meant that *faka tonga* (the Tongan way of life) remains pretty much unchanged. Life goes on as it always has done — slowly.



A participant flexes his muscles as he joins in the king's birthday parade on Tongatapu. A warm embrace is guaranteed in Tonga, one of the world's most laid-back countries

How to get there: Nicole Swengley flew to Tonga with Air New Zealand (0181-741 2299), which offers direct, low season fares (April 16-June 15) from £750 return. Stopovers in Tonga are also available en route to New Zealand with low season 60-day advance purchase fares from £773 return. **Accommodation:** In Tonga can be booked through Air New Zealand's Destinations programme (0181-741 2299). In Nukunono: Pacific Royal Hotel (friendly staff, nice bar, small pool) starts at £20 each per

night; International Date Line Hotel (faded charm, pool, Old Timer band) from £20. On 'Atata: Royal Sunset Island Resort (highly recommended) starts at £25. On Vava'u: Paradise International Hotel (fax: 00 676 70184) starts at £21. **When to go:** In winter (July-September), temperatures are pleasant (17C-22C) but winds can be strong. The first week of July is tourism week. Early summer (December and January) is a

THE SOUTH SEAS: GETTING TO TONGA



The king's birthday parade, held on July 4

good time to go as temperatures are between 25C and 30C; the remaining summer months (January to April) can be marked by heavy rain. Yachts should leave by November to avoid cyclones. **Sailing:** Sun Sail (01705 22222) has a base on Vava'u offering charters. **What to buy:** Tongan handicrafts are the best in the South Pacific. Items of jewellery made from fish teeth or seed pods make good souvenirs. **Red tape:** British and

Irish passport holders with proof of onward travel are admitted for 30 days without a visa. No vaccinations are required for entry but it is wise to consult your GP. Further information and leaflets from Tonga High Commission (0171-724 5528; fax 0171-723 9074). **Further reading:** *Tonga: Travel Survival Kit* (Lonely Planet, £6.95); *Adventuring in the Pacific* (Sierra Club, £10.99); *Cruising Guide to the Vava'u Island Group in the Kingdom of Tonga* (Cruising Guide Publications, £15).

"Old traditions and new ways don't necessarily clash," explained the King of Tonga when I was fortunate enough to be granted an audience at his white-painted, wooden, seafront palace. "Isolation is impractical. Island people are no different to anyone else — they just live on islands."

King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV

has lost 13 stone since he weighed in as the world's heaviest monarch at 33 stone, according to the *Guinness Book of Records* in 1976. Even so he remains huge, and has the stature of a god to his 105,000 subjects.

When I was requested to crouch down during his arrival at a brass band concert

(everyone sits lower than the king to show respect), I was reminded of the time his mother, Queen Salote, attended Queen Elizabeth II's coronation. It poured with rain that day. But Tongan customs forbid emulation of those you honour. So when Queen Elizabeth's carriage was covered by a hood, Queen Salote sat — magnificently drenched — in a carriage wash with water.

The busiest time to visit Vava'u is during celebrations for the crown prince's birthday on May 4. Another week of partying takes place on Tongatapu, the kingdom's main island, around the king's birthday on July 4.

Heilala Festival, as the king's birthday bash is known, is a week-long gala of sports and music competitions, feasts, military parades, a street procession of crazily decorated floats and even an annual beauty contest.

To gain an insight into traditional culture, head for the Tongan National Centre, where you can see wood-carving and 'umu (underground oven) preparation.

At night you can attend a Tongan feast at the centre, preceded by a traditional kava-drinking ceremony. Kava is the non-alcoholic national drink made from the ground root of the pepper plant. It acts as a mild tranquilliser, numbing lips and tongue, and if you like drink-

ing dishwater you'll love it. While you feast on traditional dishes like roast suckling pig, chicken, *va'a* (raw fish with chillies), octopus, sweet potato, yams, taro in coconut cream and *faikakai* (breadfruit pudding), entertainment is provided by ukulele-plucking Tongans and energetic warrior-like dancers.

The evening winds to a close with the *tau blunga*, a graceful solo female dance in which the oiled skin of the performer is plastered with bank notes by appreciative admirers.

A whole-island tour of Tongatapu costs £12 including visits to Captain Cook's reputed landing place, the sacred flying foxes (large fruit bats) hanging in the casuarina trees at Kolovai, Tonga bird park, the Ha'aponga 'a Maui Trilithon (a Stonehenge-like structure with solstice markings) and the impressive Napua 'a Vaca blowholes where the sea spurts 30m-high plumes through lava gaps.

But you may prefer to chill out on a typical South Seas beach (the best are at Keled and Ha'atafu) or visit an offshore island like Pafu, a half-hour boat trip from Nukunono, where you can over-night in *fales* (traditional thatched houses) hidden among coconut palms.

Royal Sunset Island Resort on 'Atata Island is run by

affable Kiwis, David and Terri Hunt. Their beachside *fales* have private verandas, shower rooms and snack-making facilities, while main meals are taken in an open-sided *fale* beside the lagoon. Sailing, scuba-diving, sport-fishing and seaplane safaris to atolls and volcano crater lakes are all options here, along with

visits to 'Atata's traditional village, where the resort's staff live. Envy them their lifestyle as they stroll to work along the soft white, coral sand beach beside a lagoon ten shades of blue. It's as close to paradise as you'll get this side of heaven. Apart from the eponymous hotel, of course.

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ITINERARY IN BRIEF

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To buy or not to buy in Dubai



The Creek which cuts through the centre of the city

Dubai's shopping festival draws the big spenders. But bargains can be elusive, says Jo Foley

It was sale time in downtown Dubai and we were there to make the most of it. For one month each spring, this Gulf city — one of the seven emirates that forms the United Arab Emirates — holds a shopping festival. This year's runs from March 19 to April 18. Last year, three of us, intrepid shoppers to a woman, with at least a black belt each in bargain hunting, took on the malls, markets, souks and stores.

For two days we went back and forth across the Creek (the deep water inlet that cuts through the centre of the city), rushing from bus to boat to taxi, scouring the stalls, markets and marble-and-chrome shopping malls for something to buy.

There are more than a dozen shopping malls in downtown Dubai, housing everything from antiques to shoe-shops, electronics outlets to sports shops, men's, women's and children's shops, designer boutiques, supermarkets, record stores and fast-food joints.

All the labels are there: Gucci, Dior, DKNY, Adidas, Reebok, Hugo Boss, Givenchy, even Ikea.

FACT FILE

■ **Getting there:** Jo Foley travelled with City Escapades (brochures 0990 437227, reservations 0181-563 8959), which until March 31 offers four nights at Le Meridien Jumeira Beach Hotel, including breakfast and BA flights, from £719, or from £759 between April 1-12. During the shopping festival (March 19-April 18) a three-night package costs from £644. Prices are per person, based on two sharing.

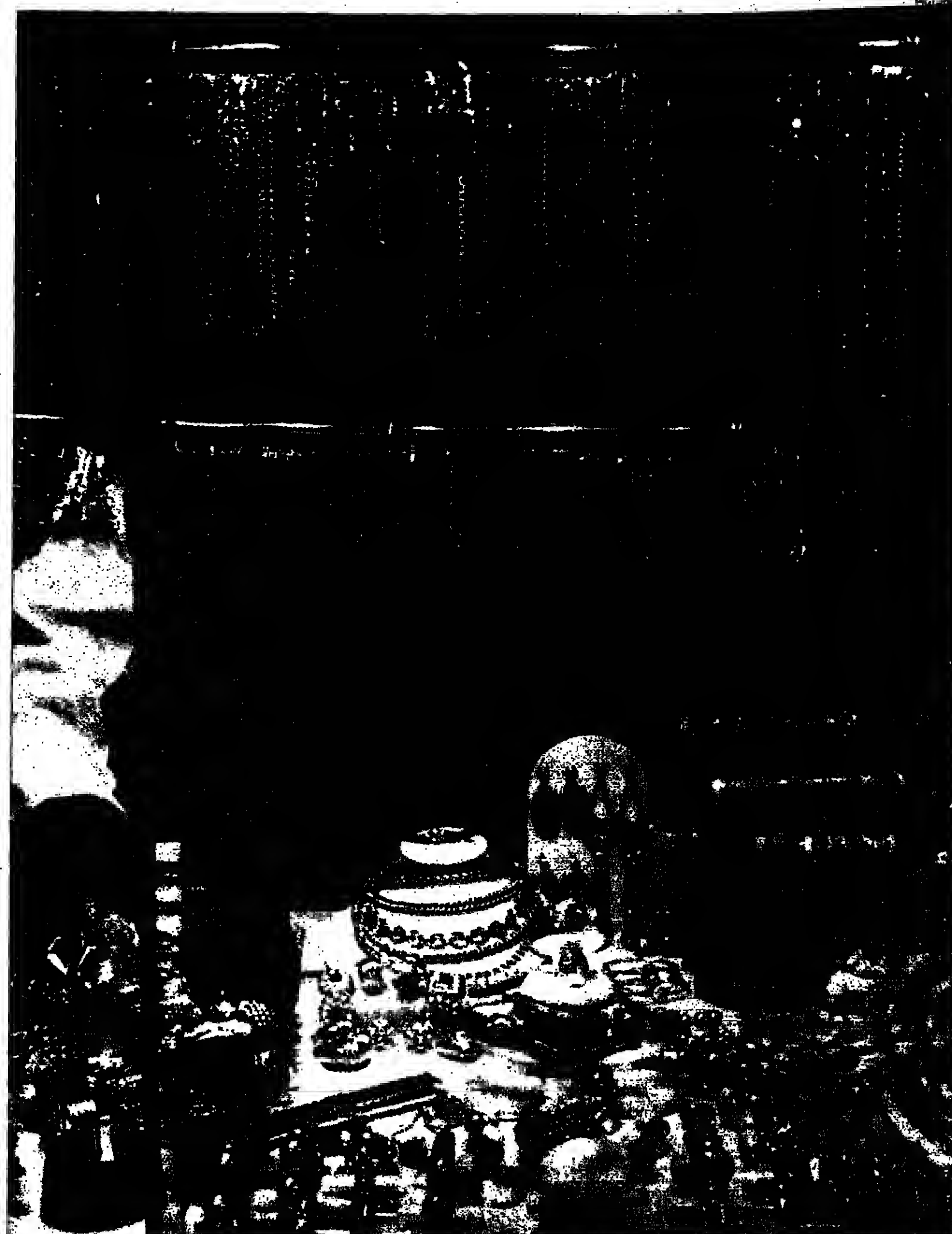
■ **Climate:** Average temperature throughout the year is 27°C, although it can reach 40°C in the summer.

■ **Red tape:** Visas required: contact the United Arab Emirates embassy on 0177-581 1281/4113.

■ **Clothing:** Dubai is a Muslim city and women should avoid wearing anything that is too tight or revealing, while men are expected to wear a top in public. At the beach or by the pool bikinis are acceptable — but not topless sunbathing.

■ **Further reading:** *Dubai Explorer* (Ocean Wave, £14.99), *Middle East on a Shoestring* (Lonely Planet, £13.99).

But at the end of two days, our meagre haul amounted to one pair of sandals, one python-patterned chiffon T-shirt, one silver torque (a twisted necklace), two silver bangles, five CDs, several grams of saffron, half a kilo of dried rose petals and two pairs of trendy Persol sunglasses which we'd had to fight over. We were speechless with



More than a dozen shopping malls make downtown Dubai a paradise for bargain hunters. Gold prices are among the cheapest in the world

failure. It was not because there was a dearth of goodies — it was just because everything was either the wrong size or not to our taste.

All the styles on offer seemed to have been chosen with the indigenous or expatriate market in mind, and were either too shiny, too glittery or too bright for us. Some of them would have looked terrific in

Marbella or Margate, but not in London or Manchester.

It was the same with the cosmetic shades — sea-green eyeshadow has never worked in daylight.

And although there were some severely elegant outfits in the *Danusa Karam* boutique, we knew we could get them more cheaply in the United States.

The gold, however, was awesome. Gold prices in Dubai are among the cheapest in the world and the gold souk, with every square centimetre glittering and gleaming, is the sort of place where you might expect Aladdin to meet Midas.

While we were there the merchants had thought up a great incentive: for every 500 dirhams spent (£83), your name was entered into a free daily raffle to win a kilo of gold. At the end of the month, all the names were entered for the biggest prize — ten kilos of gold.

Not since the great Yukon gold rush did so many go in search of so much. We really tried to buy. We agonised over so many trays of rings, bangles, chains and earrings.

One of us nearly parted with serious money for a pair of drop earrings with pearls, but inspected in the cold light of day they somehow lost their appeal.

The gold was of the 22 and 24-carat variety, which is not only the purest but also the brightest yellow — too garish for pallid northern lobes and necks.

There were some 18 carat items but they were few and unexciting — little chains and gated bracelets — hence our desperation to splash out when, on the periphery of the main gold souk, we found the silver merchants.

The prices were exceptional: about £8 to £12 for heavy, wide bangles and £18 for an elegant torque.

The CDs were bought in another frenzied attempt to spend — three for just over £18. Other bargains were the saffron which, even though it purported to come from Spain, was a mere £5 for a substantial box, while the rose petals were

almost nothing: £3 for a huge bag.

The chiffon T-shirt was all of £12 in the bargain basement of a hotel boutique while the sandals — high, black and strappy — were a mere £18. The sunglasses were £38 a pair, almost half what we would have paid in London.

These finds didn't really make up for our retail disappointment, but the raffles did. Dubai Duty Free, at the airport, is renowned for its car raffles, but during the shopping festival there were raffles everywhere.

For £20 you could win a Porsche, a Mercedes, a BMW or some other piece of serious machinery and as only 1,000 tickets were sold for each contest the odds were extremely good.

We became like women possessed and even formed a syndicate to treble our chances, while planning how to spend our shared thousands. The real prize in Dubai, however, is the desert, and when the shopping gets too much it's definitely worth a visit.

Tour organisers and operators now offer sand-skiing, dune driving and *wadi* bashing (driving across dry river beds), but to my mind, all you really need to do is to wander at the size and silence of it.

About an hour's drive from the city through the desert will bring you to Hatta — an old fort on the edge of a mountain range.

The surrounding landscape, with its near-Biblical vistas and hidden freshwater pools, is one of the most beautiful you can see anywhere within a seven-hour flight from London.

SHOP

Savvy shopping: Some smaller establishments offer discounts which they are not licensed to advertise, so it's worth taking a chance on the less likely-looking places. Keep an eye on the exchange rate and gold prices, listed at the airport, in hotels and in local newspapers. It's worth haggling on gold. Cuts of between 10 and 15 per cent are the norm.

Unexpected pleasures: Expect to find gold, spices and designer-label bargains. Caviar is cheap and widely available. Saffron and exotic oils are very cheap.

Faking it: For designer goods at back-street prices, head to the Karama district, where you'll find realistic reproductions. Good deals to be had on jeans, clothes, shoes and fake watches. Knowing your limits. Travellers returning to the UK from non-EU countries have to pay duty on gifts and souve-



Watch the locals shop

nirs worth more than £145. Dubai Duty Free is famous for its wide selection of leatherware and electronics, as well as the usual spirits, tobacco and cosmetics, so give yourself plenty of time. Paying your way: Major credit cards are accepted everywhere, and it is easy to exchange sterling or travellers' cheques. Maximising the experience: Usual shop opening hours are 9am to 1pm and 4pm to 9pm. It's cooler at night and the lighting lends a lustre to the gold and jewellery.

Stop off at local *shawarma* outlets for chicken or lamb with salad stuffed into warm Arabic bread. Most hotels have restaurants with a range of Indian, Thai, Chinese and Filipino dishes for less than £2. Further information: Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (0177-839 0580); United Arab Emirates Embassy (0177-581 1281/4113); Arabian Incentives (0181-900 0250), for groups; Shopping Festival Website: <http://DubaiSF.com>.

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Maximum Respect for the island

**In Jamaica,
Trevor Fishlock
finds more to see
than beautiful
beaches and
reggae bars**

Perhaps the best moment was waking at dawn in the hammock slung in the veranda. Daylight smudged the lingering stars, set the forest birds fluting and made lush theatre of the Blue Mountains.

Horatio Nelson enjoyed this prospect of Jamaica. As a young naval officer, and still in one piece, he guarded the island against the French and enjoyed plantation life — although he did not sleep in the hammock.

Not that I had to. Possibly it was perverse to forsake the majestic four-poster. But I had slept in the bed the night before, the breeze filtering through the veranda doors, the fireflies darting, and since Strawberry Hill is an unconventional hotel, a weightless sleep in the hammock seemed perfectly appropriate.

In a way, Strawberry Hill reminded me of Portmeirion in North Wales, the original unconventional hotel. Portmeirion's creator, Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, would have admired its commanding position in a botanical garden at 3,000ft with a glorious view over Kingston Harbour.

Sir Clough, master of picturesque vistas, also would have approved of the white-painted wooden cottages set harmoniously into the hillside. There is no air-conditioning, and breezes are lured through louvres and fretwork screens. The screens in my cottage were amusingly eroded and, like the beautiful colonial furniture, were made in the hotel's workshops.

The hotel opened four years ago, the Great House of the old Strawberry Hill plantation having blown away in the hurricane of 1988. Standing so far above the sea, Strawberry Hill provides part of the answer to the question of what you can do in Jamaica if you like beaches, but only up to a point.

When a guest at one of the popular resort hotels asked at reception for Jamaican dollars, the clerk was puzzled. Why would anyone want to leave this enclosed, all-inclusive resort with its pools, restaurants, free bars, and beach fences to keep the hustlers out?

Then she tuned in to the guest's accent. "Ah, British. Yes, sometimes you people like to go outside."

Visitors who do venture beyond the Strawberry Hill complex are shepherded by sure-footed guides up the spectacular Dunn's River Falls, or driven by bike-tour companies to a hilltop from where they freewheel down, others go rafting. Still, the only Jamaicans many tourists see are the waiters and bar staff.

But a few days with a rented car, a map and healthy curiosity reveal possibilities in a marvellous hinterland never explored by coastbound tourists. The mountains, reaching more than 7,000ft, are enthralling and you can walk through forests and among rivers and waterfalls with a sense of real exploration. If you like history, to provide ballast to a holiday, there are evocative remnants — fortifications, houses, churches and place names — of the island's historical stewpot of buccaniers, planters, slaves, rebels, missionaries and heroes. You can trail pirates such as Calico Jack, nicknamed for his taste in underpants, and the Welshman Sir Henry Morgan, who ruled Jamaica as



JAMAICA FACT FILE

■ Getting there: Trevor Fishlock flew with Air Jamaica (0181-570 7999), which flies from London to Kingston four times a week. Apex fares start at £741 plus £20 departure tax. Non-Apex returns from £864, £20 departure tax.

■ He stayed at Strawberry Hill and Goldeneye, operated by Island Outpost. Reservations 0800 614790. Accommodation at Goldeneye ranges from £390, plus Government tax of 22.5 per cent per day, to £3,000 plus tax for Ian Fleming House. One bedroom at Strawberry Hill costs from £150 per day plus tax for two people sharing.

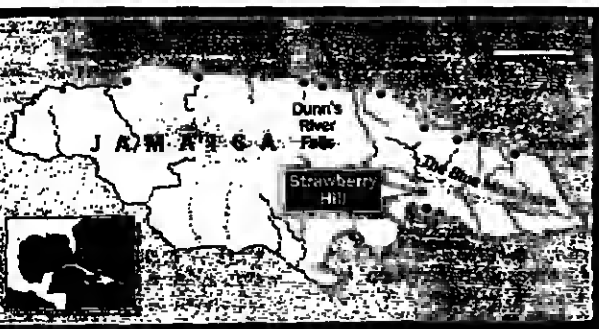
■ Visas are not necessary for British or Irish passport holders and visitors are generally allowed to stay for up to six months providing they have a valid passport and proof of onward travel. The departure tax is £9. The Jamaican High Commission can answer queries on 0171-623 9911.

■ Best time to go: The peak tourist season is from mid-December to mid-April when the rainfall is appealingly low. There is high humidity in the summer, particularly during September and October.

■ Tourist attractions include Carnival (this year from March 30 to April 6) with parades, music and culture in Montego Bay, Ocho Rios and — hottest of all — Kingston, where the week of festivities climaxes on April 5 with hundreds of thousands of Jamaicans taking to the streets for a colourful and musical procession.

Throughout the week there will be performances from some of the Caribbean's best known and loved soca and reggae bands.

■ Further information and reading: Jamaica Tourist Board (0171-224 0505), Jamaica: the Rough Guide (Rough Guides, £9.99), Jamaica: A Travel Survival Kit (Lonely Planet, £11.99), Jamaica Visitor's Guide, (Macmillan, £6.95), Pocket Jamaica (Fodor's Travel Publications, £7.99).



governor and died here. As a young man, Nelson commanded Fort Charles on Kingston Harbour, and a marble tablet in his honour gently admonishes: "You who read his footprints. Remember his glory."

Above all, there is the pleasure of country roads, lesser-known beaches and meeting Jamaica's unhurried people. Posters everywhere proclaim that you are never far from music and dancing. A reggae party poster promised "This Will Be A Total Niceness".

Violence in the capital of Kingston, where a third of the

country's 2.5 million people live, is a stain on Jamaica's reputation. But most of the island is safe and agreeable, and in Kingston itself, trouble is mostly rooted in waterfront districts where bitter gang rivalry thrives.

"We are a volatile people," Sir Howard Cooke, the 82-year-old governor-general told me. "Usually there is more noise than venom, though sometimes because of politics, it is just venom."

Bob Marley, the reggae superstar, grew up in a Kingston ghetto and his music stemmed from its contents and

suffering. His image is everywhere in Jamaica and his home in Kingston, with its recording studio, library and collection of best-selling records, is a temple. There's a pleasant little restaurant there and I recommend the brown chicken stew.

A painted cement statue of Marley commands the entrance and inside are his bed, guitars, slippers, rooms peppered with fading news cuttings and prize-winning discs. You can also see the holes in the wall made by bullets during the attempt on his life in 1976, five years before his death from cancer. "Bob," remarked his widow Rita Marley, "is still lighting sparks around the world. Here, we keep the flame alive."

After two sybaritic nights at Strawberry Hill, we drove over the Blue Mountains, descending the wiggly potholed road to Buff Bay on the northeast coast. We swam at the Blue Lagoon near Port Antonio, an old banana town with luxurious villas and hotels, which still trades on the name of the old rose Errol Flynn, who playboyed round here.

The Roof Club, which filled our skulls with rhythm, was a spirited but well-ordered nightspot with a sign warning: "Forbidden To Smoke Ganja in Here". Elsewhere on the island, you don't travel far without encountering that certain stuff of what many Jamaicans regard as the holy herb. Heading west on the coast road, we stopped frequently in villages, markets, old colonial buildings, churches and cafes. We ate goat curry, salt fish and ackee, the fruit which cooks like scrambled egg. We had a morning's riding in the forest of the 18th-century Prospect Plantation.

One hot afternoon we met Samuel, proprietor of a go-go bar at Amotto Bay. There were no customers. A bored bar-girl was watching television. Samuel sat in front of a mural depicting Haile Selassie and Marley, the Rastafarian heroes. He was studying a well-thumbed Bible. "I read it every day. It has all I need:

psychology, biology, history and sex."

It helped to have a few words of the latest vocabulary, like "Everything's fine," meaning everything's fine, and the parting salutation "Respect," to which the correct response is "Maximum Respect".

The word *bashment* I took to mean a bash, a party, but Rose Campbell, who invited us to the Day and Night Jam and domino tournament at her bar in an old railway station, said she herself would be the bashment. "So," I asked, "What does bashment mean?" "It means," Rose said, "that I will be wearing a sexy dress."

Ocho Rios is full of hotels,

some ugly, where shutting cruise ships disgorge their crowds. We escaped to Noel Coward's hilltop refuge, the house called Firefly on Henry Morgan's old Llanrunney Estate.

The house Coward built is much as it was when he died in his four-poster mahogany bed in 1973. His simple grave is in the garden, where he used to have his sunset drink, looking out over the sublime view.

The house is full of photographs of Coward and has some of his paintings too. The sheet music of *A Room With A View* rests on one of the two

baby grand pianos. A table is set as it was when he entertained the Queen Mother to lunch in 1965. Paper is rolled into the typewriter on the desk, shirts hang in the wardrobe and on a bookshelf is that most merciful of instruments, a backscratcher.

Not far away, at Goldeneye, the house near Oracabessa where Ian Fleming wrote his James Bond stories, we had lunch beneath almond trees and swam from the private beach. The house is let for £3,000 a night.

The nearby cottage cluster secluded in a grove of trees is another unconventional hotel. Like Strawberry Hill, it is the creation of Chris Blackwell,

who, as Bob Marley's producer-promoter, brought Jamaican music to the world. And, like Strawberry Hill, it is designed by the Jamaican architect, Ann Hodges, and built by local craftsmen.

Strawberry Hill has made no money yet and a spa is being added to attract more visitors. But Mr Blackwell is prepared to wait. "Naturally, I would like it to make a profit soon, but my rule is never to cut corners," he says. "As in my music, my approach is not to rush but to let things grow organically."

It's a good philosophy for visiting Jamaica, too. Slow down, get off the beaten track and let the charm seep in.

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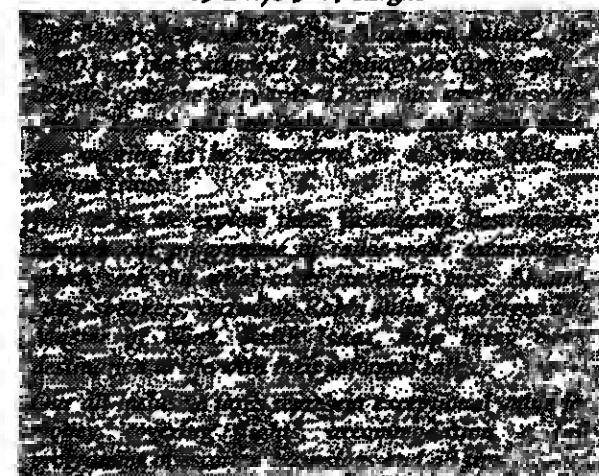
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Ski touring in Switzerland is still as tough as it was in Conan Doyle's day. "You must not fall over, and you must not stop," snapped our guide

Elementary way to climb the mountain



"You naturally expect trouble when you are beginning," Conan Doyle wrote

On March 23, 1894, Arthur Conan Doyle made history by crossing the Malenfelder Furka pass from Davos to Arosa on skis. He left under "a great pale moon in a violet sky," a Renaissance man carrying 8ft "Norwegian snowshoes" on his shoulder. His companions were Switzerland's ski pioneers, Tobias and Johannes Branger, respectively a saddler and a summer mountain guide.

As the spring sun rose over the mountains, the trio strapped on their snowshoes with makeshift leather bindings and fell into a rhythm for the turgid up to the 2,440m pass. In the late morning, they descended through deep powder, arriving at the Hotel Seefeld in time for lunch.

A piece of cake, or so it seemed more than 100 years later in the bar of the Hotel Seefeld as our guide told us the itinerary for the next day. After breakfast, we would take the bus from Davos to Frauenthal to start our adventure, whereas Conan Doyle had walked. We would climb on touring skis with skins, whereas he used rudimentary string nets to prevent his skis from slipping backwards. We had the best weatherproof clothing, whereas he wore a Harris tweed outfit that his tailor had assured him was indestructible. The trip to Arosa would prove this boast wrong. "He [the tailor] will find samples of his ware on view from the Furka Pass to Arosa," Conan Doyle wrote in an account of the journey in *Strand Magazine*.

Conan Doyle's two-year flirtation with Davos began in the autumn of 1893 when he booked his wife, Louise, into one of the sanatoriums for which the town was famous. At 35, he was at the peak of his powers, as a doctor and scientist as well as a novelist, yet he readily gave it all up for the slim hope of curing Louise's tuberculosis. He sold his house and furniture, left their two young children with his mother and killed off Sherlock Holmes — only temporarily, it transpired — to concentrate on his beloved "Touie".

When she began to recover, he found time to follow up Tobias Branger's advertisement for the "snowshoes" he had imported from Norway in 1890. The Branger brothers

The creator of Sherlock Holmes was one of the first skiers, Minty Clinch reports



first attempts to teach themselves to ski excited so much that they preferred to practise at night, but by the time Conan Doyle knocked on their door, they had developed an effective technique for braking, using a long pole. The novelist was not so sure.

"You naturally expect trouble when you are beginning, and you are not likely to be disappointed," he wrote, "but as you get on a little, the thing becomes more irritating. The skis are the most capricious things upon the earth. One day you cannot go wrong with them; on another, with the same weather and the same snow, you cannot go right. For a man who suffers from too much dignity, a course of Norwegian snowshoes would have a fine moral effect."

Quite so, I tried to take his words to heart as we left civilisation, initially for a forest trail, then for the open spaces near the top of the pass as deserted as in Sir Arthur's day.

As we rose into a whitewind, our guide suffered a panic attack. "You must not fall over," he snapped, "and you must not stop." In the face of a nippy little wind that flayed our faces, we completed the 940m climb in four hours and started our descent.

Conan Doyle described a 50- to 60-degree slope ending in "an absolute precipice, where a slip might have been serious". As good guides should, the Brangers walked below

him for half a mile to break his fall if need be.

Then came "the real sport of snowshoeing: we shot along over gently dipping curves, skimming down the valley without a motion of our feet. In that great untrodden waste, with snowfields bounding vision on every side, and no marks of life save the track of chamois and foxes, it was glorious to whiz along in this easy fashion."

More precipices awaited further down, so steep that the Brangers lashed their skis together to fashion impromptu toboggans. "Sitting on our skis, with our heels dug into the snow and our sticks pressed hard down behind us, we began to move down the precipitous face of the pass," Conan Doyle wrote. "I think both my companions came to grief over it. I know they were as white as Lot's wife at the bottom."

With modern techniques and equipment, the precipice factor was much reduced and we worked our way down over a glittering sheen of ice covering pockets of false snow.

Turn, turn," tried our guide, obsessed with getting back to his wife or his local bar as soon as possible. I reflected on lunch in the Seefeld Hotel and let caution rule, but the guide had the last laugh as we stopped on the banks of the lake at Arosa. Where was the town? Triumphant, he pointed up the hill. Forty tortuous minutes later we were snatching a beer at the railway station before the three-hour journey back to Davos. A wizened ancient then explained that it was possible to take a lift up the Sirella pass and ski down to Arosa without breaking sweat.

Conan Doyle made the trip in reverse four days later. Within a month, he had climbed the Bransbühl on the other side of the Davos valley. "I am convinced," he wrote, "that the time will come when hundreds of Englishmen will come to Switzerland for the skiing season. I believe I may be the first, save only two Switzers, to do any mountain work, but I am certain I will not be many thousands be the last."

How right he was: the Bramabuel T-bar is there to prove it.

ANCIENT RUSSIA and its Waterways



A 14 night river journey linking Russia's two greatest cities — Moscow & St Petersburg

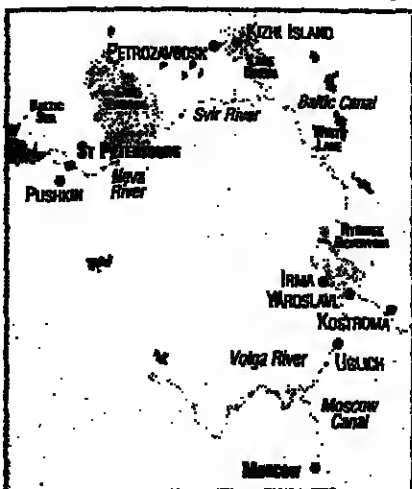
MAY TO SEPTEMBER 1998

A visit to Russia for the genuine traveller is one of life's great experiences. So many just dip their toes in the water with a brief visit to Moscow or St Petersburg which is interesting enough in its own way. However, for a comprehensive experience, there is nothing like a two week trip which includes both Moscow and St Petersburg, together with the cities of the Golden Ring and the delights of the changeless Russian countryside.

With three days in both Moscow and St Petersburg there is plenty of time to explore the sights. The remaining eight days are spent journeying between the two cities on an intricate pattern of connecting rivers, canals and lakes which will take us through a rolling landscape, dotted with farms, villages and towns, their rooftops often dominated by exotically shaped onion-domed churches.

Our exploration of ancient Russia will introduce us to the magical Golden Ring cities of Holy Russia which still preserve their medieval kremlins, fortified monasteries and beautiful cathedrals and churches. In the great forests of Kareliya we will encounter the vast lakes of Ladoga and Onega and experience the tranquil and timeless quality of the Russian countryside.

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These large modern vessels were specially designed for the Russian waterways and each accommodates up to 260 passengers in 'outside' cabins with private shower and toilet. The vessels are under a long term charter to an American company who are responsible for the day to day operation of the vessel. This is an important consideration when selecting your vessel as our ships are only marketed in English speaking countries and consequently English is the language used onboard, unlike many other vessels which are multi-lingual.

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FACT FILE

■ Minty Clinch stayed in Davos as a guest of Swiss Travel Service (01992 456123). Hotel Flüela, seven nights' half board, from £172 including scheduled flights, with availability in March and April: 1998-99 winter holidays booked before March 31 will be at 1997-98 prices.
■ The Conan Doyle Classic can be arranged through the Swiss Ski School in Davos Dorf (00 41 81 416 2454). A mountain guide costs £115 a day for one to three people.
■ Details: Davos Tourist Office (00 41 81 415 2221).
■ Many Conan Doyle enthusiasts are drawn to Meiringen, in the eastern Bernese Oberland, site of the Reichenbach Falls where Sherlock Holmes and the evil Moriarty plunged to their fictional deaths.
■ British Holmes fans make an occasional pilgrimage there in May (the Sherlock Holmes Society, 0181-540 7657 or 01689 81334, has details), and there is a small Sherlock Holmes Museum in Meiringen (00 41 33 971 4141).

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Have baby, will travel with ease

Sean Coughlan wanted to take his family to Paris - but would the train or plane be least stressful?



You must have seen the couple travelling with the baby from hell. Whether it's in a departure lounge or a railway station, there's always the same grim scene of a caterwauling infant flanked by exhausted parents, often covered in baby yoghurt and shouting bitter recriminations at each other. The only remaining issue is whether they ring the dry cleaners or the divorce lawyers first.

Travelling with a baby that has decided it doesn't want to travel can be a chilling experience. So any attempt to ease the path of the parental traveller is to be warmly welcomed. On the keenly competitive London-to-Paris route, where every passenger counts, both Eurostar and the airlines have taken steps to attract parents with young children.

But how do they really compare? Travelling with our six-month-old daughter, said friends, would be about as relaxing as taking a hungry goat around a supermarket. There'd be chaos, tantrums and tears. There'd be no access for the pushchair. The baby would hate the long train journey and scream her way through take-off and landing. There'd be parental angst in abundance.

In practice, when my wife Estelle and I tested both journeys, our fears proved unfounded as both Eurostar and Air France were reassuringly well-equipped. Anna, our baby test pilot, dozed untroubled through much of both journeys, lulled by the motion into sleep. And the facilities in Heathrow and on board the train made feeding and changing relatively hassle-free.

Where both journeys became much more difficult was the getting to and from city centres and airports and railway stations. Travelling with a baby in a pushchair on a crowded tube to Heathrow is a slow-motion glimpse of purgatory. In Paris, the journeys from Charles de Gaulle and

All set to go: Sean Coughlan and six-month-old Anna (above) board the train for the Paris leg of the journey

The Coughlans' journey was relatively easy (right), despite warnings to the contrary from friends



'Buggy been there, done that. Air and rail travel was manageable, and fun, for all

Gare du Nord into the city centre were made miserable by underground stations designed like obstacle courses for anyone with a pushchair, with sheer-drop escalators, staircases and unmanned ticket turnstiles over which the pushchair and baby had to be lifted.

If a winner had to be selected, it would have to be the train, if only by a narrow margin. Although the flight itself was fast and comfortable, getting to Heathrow and the processing time made the journey feel much longer and as a consequence more irritating for our infant traveller. In contrast, the seamlessness of the trip on the Eurostar train seemed to soothe the baby.



IT MUST be some kind of parental rite of passage to change a nappy while travelling at high speed beneath the English Channel. While the Eurostar train belted through the Channel Tunnel, I was getting to work with the Huggies.

Each Eurostar train has a baby changing room, with mat, sink and oompy bags. As well as changing nappies, on the evening that we travelled the room was being used by parents dressing their babies for bed. The three-hour journey is long enough for children to settle down to sleep and our carriage, which had other families with young children, soon resembled a mobile dormitory.

On the downside, you are stuck on the train for three hours, with no way of break-

ing the journey. So if your baby decides that train isn't the way to travel, then you're in trouble.

The only way to change the scenery is to take the baby on a tour of the train, with such limited diversions as a trip to the buffet.

As well as selling cold drinks to soothe adult brows, the staff in the buffet were also happy enough to warm up a bottle of baby food in their microwave oven, although with the observation that an earlier attempt had caused a baby-food explosion in what sounded like a noxious cheese-flavoured Chernobyl.

It's difficult to generalise about how babies react to new surroundings, but our daughter took to the journey without a murmur. It helps that there's almost no hanging around in the terminal beforehand, with passport control being on the train and checking-in being limited to putting a ticket into a gate.

The hardest part of the journey was trying to get out



Connections: Paris is 40 minutes from Heathrow

PARIS FACT FILE

- The Coughlan family travelled by Eurostar and Air France. Eurostar trains (0990 836186) travel London to Paris 16 times a day. Adult fares from £69 return; children three and under go free.
- Air France (0181-742 6600) flies to Paris 14 times a day from Heathrow and five times from London City Airport. Adult fares are from £88 return (plus £17 airport tax), with 10 per cent surcharge for children under 2.
- Useful reading: *Travel with Children* (Lonely Planet, £5.95); *Around and About Paris* by Thirza Vallois (Hodder, £12.95); *Paris* (Corgi City Guides, £12.99).

where it was checked in separately. This might not sound much, but if you've been stuck on a tube with a baby rehearsing for a Munch painting, this is some kind of parent heaven.

The flight took little more than 40 minutes and our daughter slept in her mother's arms throughout (there was no separate seat-belt, untroubled by take-off or landing). Staff at the check-in and on board were helpful and, as a small perk, parents with young children were given a bag with baby wipes, baby lotion and a teething toy.

Getting to our hotel on the Left Bank was less straightforward. The lift at the airport terminal in Paris was broken, which meant carrying baby and pushchair downstairs. Again, getting on and off the RER suburban rail system meant hauling baby and pushchair over ticket barriers, which were all unattended.

If the flight could be isolated from the rest of the journey, one could recommend flying for any baby-toting parents.

But the largest part of the journey was spent on underground trains or in airports, so the plane comes a close second to the ease and comfort of the train.

of the underground system and into the mainline station at Gare du Nord. There were no staff to open the ticket barrier to allow us to take the pushchair through.

If two people are travelling with a child it is possible for one person to go through the gate while the second deals with baby and pushchair. But if you were travelling alone, I don't see how you would get through.

Waterloo was much better organised for pushchair traffic, with a lift from the international to the mainline station and staff at the ticket gates in the tube station.

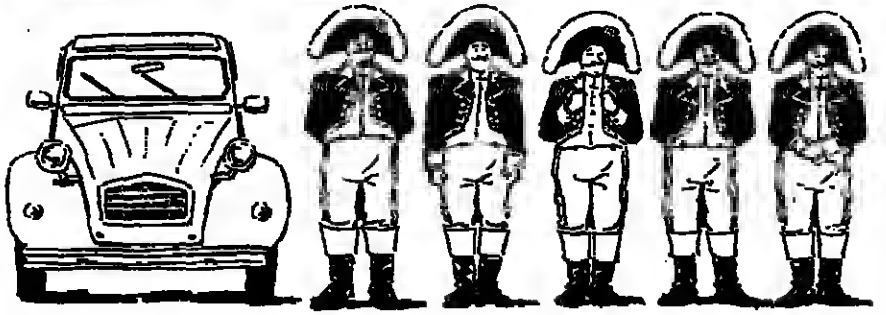
Babies seem to come with an in-built, and very sensitive, stress detector and the Eurostar journey, taken as a whole, left our offspring smiling rather than howling.

BY PLANE



The greatest disadvantage of taking the plane is the part of the journey over which the airlines have least control: the trip to Heathrow. We live 18 miles from the airport, in South London, and the journey by train and tube took us 1½ hours. The winner of the

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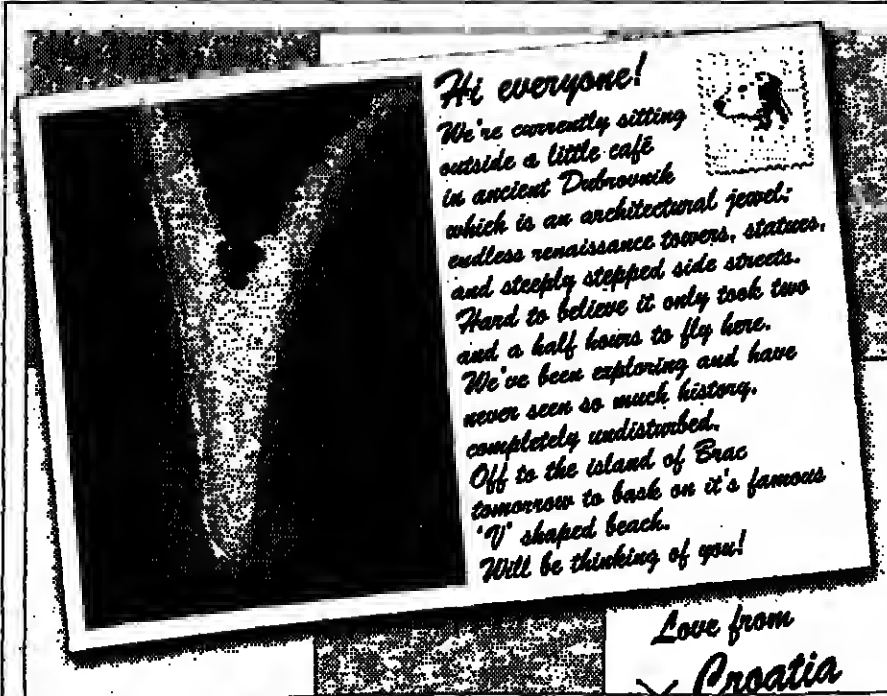
STANFORD, Hong Kong: excellent medium class hotel in Kowloon. Restaurants, bar, airconditioned rooms, TV, minibar, phone, bath/shower. (Single rooms have shower only).
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REGENT, Cha-Am: charming 1st class hotel, set on a 4 mile stretch of sandy beach. (Choice of restaurants, bar, swimming pools, fitness room, tennis, squash. Shuttle bus service into Hua Hin. Rooms are airconditioned with phone, TV, radio, minibar, bath, shower and balcony.

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Hi everyone!
We're currently sitting outside a little cafe in ancient Dubrovnik which is an architectural jewel: endless renaissance towers, statues, and steeply stepped side streets. Hard to believe it only took two and a half hours to fly here. We've been exploring and have never seen so much history, completely undisturbed. Off to the island of Brač tomorrow to bask on it's famous 'U' shaped beach. Will be thinking of you!

Love from
Croatia

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Anjana Ahuja missed the recent solar eclipse, but she is determined to see next year's

Star gazers fazed, but not eclipsed

The thought of a cloudy Caribbean day on February 26 would not have bothered most holidaymakers unduly. But for many amateur astronomers, including my husband and I, it was a disaster. It meant that our visit to Antigua to view that most rare and spectacular of astronomical events — a total solar eclipse — had ended in failure.

Total solar eclipses happen only every couple of years at different locations around the world. Because the path of totality — from where the eclipse can be seen — is very narrow, some eclipses can only be seen from the ocean. This is why the ones that take place over land attract thousands of eclipse-chasers, especially from America.

When it transpired that such an event was to grace the islands of Antigua, Guadeloupe, Aruba, Curacao and Montserrat (plus a swath of South America) last month, we, and thousands of others, booked our first international astronomical adventure.

A solar eclipse occurs when the Moon passes exactly in front of the Sun, briefly turning day into night. It also gives people a chance to observe the corona surrounding the Sun, an ever-present magnificent halo of light — featuring streaks, loops and streamers — that is normally drowned by the Sun's brightness.

It didn't take long, however, for our confidence in the azure Antiguan skies to dissolve. We had already noted the paucity of weather reports — we turned in to several radio stations to try to find the best spot on the island for watching it, only to hear crackly prayer sessions by islanders convinced that the momentary darkness wrought by the eclipse spell Armageddon. With only three hours to go before the showdown, the appearance of a few large, fast-moving rainclouds made weather reports all the more urgent. Armed with our solar eclipse glasses (never, ever watch the Sun directly), we stayed put, hoping the clouds would clear. We were mistaken.

After the darkness had passed, we compensated by downing a few cocktails. Other astronomers, some of whom had struck lucky at less cloudy locations, assured us it was all part of the game, which is why actually seeing a total solar eclipse is regarded as a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

We had several consolations. At least we had not attempted the March 1997 eclipse over Siberia and Mongolia, where irate visitors had to endure cloudy skies. We had already seen England win a Test match, graced the Trinidad carnival, and now we were drowning our sorrows at the couples-only resort Sandals, possibly the most flamboyant hotel on the island.

Moreover, we will get another chance next year. The total solar eclipse on August 11, 1999, grazes the southernmost tip of Cornwall. Many hotels and guesthouses are already booked, but we have every intention of travelling down there. If it eludes us again, then it's South Africa in 2001. But who knows — the Cornish heavens might yet deliver the blue skies that the Caribbean couldn't.

Anjana Ahuja travelled with Sandals Antigua (0800 742742). Seven-day all-inclusive packages start at £290 per couple, including midweek BA flights. The price also includes all water sports. For information about the 1999 eclipse in Cornwall, call the Cornwall Tourist Board on 01872 724057.



Sunspotters: Two Colombian Arhuaco Indians watch the solar eclipse through dark glasses

P&O Stena merger may push up prices

PASSENGERS could end up being "ripped off" when P&O and Stena Line start a joint cross-Channel ferry service on Tuesday, according to consumer groups. Tom Chesshyre writes.

The long-awaited merger between the two biggest cross-Channel operators was given the go-ahead last month by Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, following investigations by the Office of Fair Trading and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. The new company, P&O Stena Line, will be allowed to trade without any price-capping until March 2001.

However, the Consumers Association is concerned that ticket prices could be hiked. A spokeswoman said: "This merger has created a monopoly situation. Let's hope they don't start showing up prices. There should be a regulatory body that is able to cap prices over the next three years."

The merger means that the

new company will have a 40 per cent share of the cross-Channel market. SeaFrance, a smaller operator, expressed concern that this share might increase as P&O Stena Line would have a "dominant market position" which was against fair competition.

BUT OTHER rivals, including Eurotunnel (operators of Le Shuttle) and Hoverspeed, have welcomed the move, saying it would create more stable cross-Channel prices.

P&O Stena Line announced reduced "Early Booking" summer prices in a bid to counter criticism. For example, a return fare for a car and up to nine passengers on the Dover-Calais route, for any length of stay on the Continent, costs £98 if booked and paid for by March 31 — £61 less than the previous price.

"We're glad the merger has finally happened," said a spokesman. "Together we will be able to provide a better service."

Foreign Office advice on Egypt is 'too cautious'

Tour operators are complaining that Foreign Office travel advice for Egypt is over-emphasising the threat of terrorism and discouraging tourists, Tom Chesshyre writes.

The Foreign Office last changed its travel advice for Egypt on December 10, less than a month after the massacre of 58 holidaymakers — including six British nationals — by Islamic terrorists at Luxor. But operators say that it is outdated, as Egypt has since increased security.

The December 10 advice reads: "Since the Luxor incident extremist groups have threatened further attacks against tourists: these threats should be taken seriously. Visitors are advised to take great caution when visiting the Nile Valley south of and including Minya Province."

A Foreign Office spokesman admitted that changes to the wording were being considered. However, he added: "At the moment we consider the advice to be an accurate report of the facts. It would be wrong not to point out the track record of terrorism in Egypt."

First Choice is the only major British tour operator that has not gone back into Egypt. Eleven other big operators have either already returned or are taking bookings. However, demand has fallen by more than 90 per cent for some holiday packages.

"There are now some very good bargains," pointed out a spokeswoman for Kuoni. Egypt's Ministry of Culture announced last month that it is putting up electric fences around archaeological sites in Luxor, Aswan and Edfu.

Samia Khatib, director of the Egyptian State Tourist Office in London, said: "The Foreign Office has got to change its advice now. Many security measures have been put in place which make another attack very unlikely."



Akhmetmehu's tomb, Giza, opened this week

But Declan Morton, of Hayes and Jarvis (which used to take 450 tourists a week to Luxor, but now sends 30), thinks the language is too strong. He said: "I can understand that the Foreign Office wants to take a cautious position, but it does not reflect the actual situation facing tourists in Egypt."

Somak Holidays suspended its Luxor programme following last November's massacre, but plans to restart it in July. An official said: "What I would like to know is why the Foreign Office has not changed its advice. An update is definitely due."

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Majorca makeover will improve the island image

MAJORCA is to get a makeover, which may include demolishing some of the ugly, mass-market hotels, Tom Chesshyre writes. Two years ago Calvia Council, responsible for resorts including Magaluf in southern Majorca, began a £73-million campaign to get rid of the tackiest hotels — the first to go was the Hotel Atlantic, a large-lout havelock in Magaluf.

Now the Balearic Islands Government has passed a decree forcing hotel developers to buy a "deteriorated" hotel before they can build a new one. This way, new hotels (which must be at least four-star) will be built on the existing sites.

Last year 2,879,600 British tourists visited Majorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera Islands — the second highest number of visitors from any country.

A spokeswoman for tour operator Thomson said: "It's fine, as long as prices don't get hiked up. The Government should also be aware that some people prefer to stay in small hotels that are not four or five-star."

Few places remain in the world where you can be assured that nature in its purest form will provide highlights after unexpected highlights. The region beyond Norway's North Cape is without doubt such a wilderness.

This summer, you have the opportunity to join the Professor Multanovsky as she undertakes a series of 8 night cruises in July. You will encounter great concentrations of seabirds from Kittiwakes to the diminutive little auks and rarities like ivory gulls; magnificent fjords, a runda landscape miraculously dotted with wild flowers and a stunning scenery of sheer cliffs and vast glaciers.

We will visit areas of extraordinary remoteness and beauty, places enriched by highly unusual wildlife including reindeer, walrus, Arctic fox and most excitingly of all — polar bears.

Although we will set sail with a planned schedule, experience has shown us over the years that in order to achieve the most exciting expedition cruise, it may on occasion be advantageous to make changes to the itinerary, following a local reconnaissance, a change in the weather, ice conditions or perhaps a sighting of a polar bear or whale. Our 8 days in Spitsbergen will be much influenced by local conditions and because of our highly adaptable vessel and zodiacs we are able to offer a close-up, personal experience that simply is not possible aboard a large ship.

rehabilitated for expeditionary travel. The Multanovsky is a comfortable and well equipped vessel, accommodating a maximum of 48 passengers.

All passenger accommodation has outside views and you can choose between a two berth cabin with shower and toilet or a two berthed cabin with shared facilities.

Public areas include a lounge/bar with library, single sitting dining room, clinic, sauna and an 'open' bridge where passengers are free to visit at most times.

The hearty and excellent meals are supervised by European staff.

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Venice from £214 per person. Extra nights cost from £24 per person. Transfers and taxes are not included. Departs from Heathrow or Gatwick on March 13 and 14.

□ HOPING for a hot getaway? Kuoni is offering seven nights' accommodation only at Hawksbill Beach Hotel in Antigua from £739 per person, including return flights from Heathrow, transfers and taxes. Departs on Wednesday, March 11; call 01306 742222 for details. Also on offer is seven nights' B&B at the Full Moon Beach resort in the Maldives from £718 per person. Return flights from Gatwick on March 15, transfers and taxes are also included. Call 01306 742000.

□ BRITISH Airways (0345 222111) is launching a new route to Palma, the capital of Majorca, today. To celebrate, BA has a special offer on all fares on this route booked before March 18. Return flights are from £99 mid-week and £109 at weekends, including taxes. Flights depart on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays; visits must include a Saturday night.

□ HEAD FOR Istanbul with Travelscene (0181-427 8800), which is offering three nights' B&B and return flights from Heathrow from £238 per person, including taxes and arrival transfers. Departs daily.

JOANNA HUNTER

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London - Berlin	£129 AB Airlines (ex-Gatwick)	£398 AB Airlines (ex-Gatwick)
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* Prices shown in the left-hand column are the lowest published excursion fares. Prices shown in the right-hand column are the lowest available flexible fares which do not require a Saturday night stay and which, in many cases, allow changes or cancellations without penalty. In all cases you are advised to check the restrictions, if any, when booking.
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TRAVEL TIPS by Jill Crawshaw

TRAVEL JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR



Modern view of Catalonia

ALL LOVERS of modern art should ensure that they pay a visit soon to Catalonia, a wonderful region of Spain which is positively overflowing with the works of some of the greatest masters of the 20th century.

These include Salvador Dali, Joan Miró and Pablo Picasso, to name but a few — and the Miró Foundation in Barcelona, to single out just one art gallery, has a magnificent selection of 5,000 drawings, 217 paintings and 153 sculptures.

Lakes and Mountains Holidays (01329 844405) has week-long guided tours that will take in the best of the exhibitions, galleries and museums. The tours will go via Barcelona, Montserrat, Sitges, Cadaqués and Figueras, where Dali is buried beneath his own

surrealistic museum. They will take place during May and September and will cost £629. This will include flights and hotel accommodation, as well as some meals and entrance fees.

Babies only

THOSE planning a holiday without children should take note — you may wish to avoid Europe's first Baby and Family Valley in Gmünd, Austria. It offers amenities varying from baby-sitting and "nappy walks" (nappy-changing facilities and tummy rubs en route), to Baby City — a Wild West township with a saloon for wetting the throats of thirsty infants and drying the other bits.

There are 71 locations, ranging from five-star hotels to farmhouses, which cater especially for children, with flexible meal-times and no danger of childless guests complaining about the noise. Details from the Austrian National Tourist Office (0171-629 0461; fax 0171-499 6038).

AS ONE Paris museum shuts its doors (Centre Georges Pompidou is closed for renovation until December 31, 1999) another one opens. Situated in the all-night district of Pigalle, the Museum of Eroticism, which opened in November, has been described as a "treasure house" of erotica ranging from ancient Roman wind chimes that are overly masculine, to what the founder saw as Victorian. The museum, at 72 Boulevard de Clichy, is open daily, 10am to 2am; entrance £4.

Georgian trek

SHERPA Expeditions (0181-577 2717) is introducing two-week treks to Georgia in June and September, starting and finishing



Portrait of the artist: a surreal glimpse of Salvador Dali, one of the modern masters who is the focus of a tour of Catalonia with Lakes and Mountains Holidays

in Tbilisi, the capital. The expeditions will travel in four-wheel-drive vehicles into the gorges and highlands of the Caucasus, stopping at medieval monasteries and fortresses. From there, ten-day treks among the mountains include visits to the villages of the Khvatsuri region, a forgotten wilderness where many traditions have remained unchanged for centuries.

Both trips cost £1,170 for flights and 15 nights' full-board accommodation in tents and hotels.

In memoriam

THE Royal British Legion (01622 716729) offers 27 escorted tours worldwide this year. "Many people come for personal reasons, either because they fought there or to visit a relative's grave, but our tours are open to anyone interested in military history," says the organiser, Piers Storie-Fugh. "And remember that the arrangement by which war widows can reclaim most of the cost of the tour from a government-sponsored scheme

ends on April 1 next year." Destinations include Burma, Indonesia and India, Israel, Korea and Europe.

On August 7, the RBL is returning to Ypres for a three-day visit to mark the 70th anniversary of the first large British Legion pilgrimage to honour the dead of the First World War. The cost is £179 which includes coach travel and half-board hotel accommodation. A weekend trip in September will visit some of the East Anglian airfields from which up to

5,000 flights were made each day in the Second World War. On the itinerary: Duxford, where the first Spitfire landed in 1938; Little Walden and Basingbourn, base of the Memphis Belle, star of the film. The trip, on September 12-15, costs £129 half-board.

QUARRIES and tin mines, cotton mills and lighthouses are among the 58 working and living sites listed in an Industrial Heritage leaflet from the National Trust, owner

of the premises. The earliest, dating from 1584, is the site of Britain's first copper smelting works, Aberdulas Falls in Wales, where water is now used to generate electricity from a turbine and from a new waterwheel in the original wheel-pit. The most recent is the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment base at Orford Ness, which was in operation from 1959 to 1971. The leaflets are available free from the National Trust (0181-315 1111).

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CADOGAN HOLIDAYS	8 Award winning

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CRUISE & SAIL ABROAD	WORLDWIDE CRUISING

SUMMER FJORDS AND MIDNIGHT SUN	FLIGHTS

CRUISE TO THE NORTH CAPE	FLIGHTS

THE FJORDS & NORTH CAPE	FLIGHTS

NORWAY & THE BALTIC	FLIGHTS

NORTH CAPE & SPITSBERGEN	FLIGHTS

NORWEGIAN EXPLORER	FLIGHTS

BLACK WATCH DOVER	FLIGHTS

BLACK PRINCE DOVER	FLIGHTS

CRUISE TO THE NORTH CAPE	FLIGHTS

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Cruises with a difference to Norwegian fjords and the North Cape

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[BW 809] 13 nights departs Dover 12 June 98
Outside Twin berth Cabin from £2,115 per person

BLACK WATCH DOVER - Amsterdam - Rotterdam - Looe - Harard - Stavanger - Bergen - DOVER

NORWAY & THE BALTIC

[BP 864] 12 nights departs Dover 11 July 98
Inside Twin berth Cabin from £1,590 per person
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BLACK PRINCE DOVER - Bergen - Flekkefjord - Oslo - Copenhagen - Kaliningrad - Bornholm - Kiel - Brunsbüttel - DOVER

NORTH CAPE & SPITSBERGEN

[BW 808] 15 nights departs Dover 26 June 98
Inside Twin berth Cabin from £1,740 per person
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BLACK WATCH DOVER - Amsterdam - Malmö - Hamburg - Langesund - Stamsund - Nu Hvaler - Tromsø - Harard - Bergen - DOVER

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[BW 812] 8 nights departs Dover 31 August 98
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No 3452: Anagrominoes by Bundle

6	3	1	1	0	1	5	0
2	0	0	5	6	2	3	2
5	4	0	5	5	3	1	4
1	1	6	6	4	4	6	6
4	5	3	3	3	5	4	1
0	2	2	2	2	6	2	3
3	6	4	4	1	0	0	5

Result:

1st _____
2nd _____
3rd _____
4th _____

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in association with Waterstone's

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Cut out and send the completed crossword and coupon above to The Listener Crossword No 3452, 63 Green Lane, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL3 6HE, by Thursday, March 19.

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The winner will receive a Waterstone's book token worth £75. Five runners-up will each receive a book token worth £10.

Waterstone's first opened a bookshop in 1982, and now has a branch in almost every major town and city in the UK and Ireland. Each of its 100-odd branches has at least 50,000 titles in stock and can order any book currently in print in the UK. Out-of-Print Booksearch, 01892 527700, Mailing Service and Signed First Editions, 01225 448996. For your nearest branch of Waterstone's, call 01225 448996.

ANAGROMINOES are played with a special set of dominoes, seven being dealt to each of four players. At the start of the game, 14 different consonants are assigned in seven pairs to represent uniquely the number of spots on an end from 0 to 6.

Whenever a domino is played (apart from the first one), one or both ends must touch one or more dominoes which have already been played. The numbers do not have to match, but the player must instead think of a word (or a recognised phrase) for each touching end of the domino that has just been played.

Words must include the consonant pair represented by the number on the end of the domino and may include consonant pairs for any other numbers which that end of the domino touches; any combination of vowels (including Y) may be added, but no other consonants. A four-consonant word scores one point, a six-consonant word two points and the maximum eight-consonant word scores three points.

The player gives a definition of each such word and play passes round the circle. The player with the most points at the end wins.

For the first turn only, each end is deemed to be touching its opposite end. So the player must make two words according to the rules by using just the four consonants represented by the two numbers on the first domino.

In this game, players A, B, C and D found at least a four-consonant word (or phrase) for each of the two touching ends in every turn: the clues give the two definitions and their answer lengths. The diagram shows the board at the end of the game, each number representing a number of spots on an end of a domino. Solvers need only draw in the outlines of the dominoes and show which players come first, second, third and fourth.

CLUES

- A1 Achieve (6) Plant (7)
B1 Grooved (6) Let Down (7)
C1 Hit (6) Meat (5)
D1 Speckle (5) Bodily (5)
A2 Arguer (7) Person under obligation (6)
B2 Tail (5) Groom (8, hyphenated)
C2 Slotted (7) Protuberances (5)
D2 Flaming (7) Tower (6)
A3 Game (12, hyphenated) With a tuft of hair above the hoof (9)
B3 Volume (6) Crumbly (7)
C3 Insect (8) Riding place (9)
D3 Expand (7) Drawn (8)
A4 Anti-aircraft (6, hyphenated) PR man (5)
B4 Compacted (6) Water mill part (10, hyphenated)
C4 Home economics skill (7) Collecting (8)
D4 User rhetoric for the better (9) Tirade (8)
A5 Upset (6) Storage time (8, hyphenated)
B5 Party (8, 2 words) Knockout (6)
C5 Missile carrier (11, 2 words) Making fuel (6)
D5 Native (9) Put away (10)
A6 Escroacher (7) Reconciling (11)
B6 Shaver (6) Level (5)
C6 Drop solidly (5) Collected as a set (9)
D6 Winning (7) Washing (10)
A7 Cracker (6) Strip of leaves (9)
B7 Bobble (6) Alarming (8)
C7 Vegetable (8) Trees (8)
D7 Quickly (7) Coloured (9)

N	A	R	C	I	S	S	I	S	M	O	M	E	O	W
A	K	E	N	N	E	T	H	T	O	P	E	R	A	I
T	E	D	Y	N	C	O	C	O	H	E	R	E	R	L
H	E	L	M	T	L	I	O	N	M	O	C	O	C	K
A	G	A	M	E	I	C	N	E	S	N	O	B	S	L
N	A	D	H	A	P	N	E	A	J	E	R	O	M	E
I	N	S	S	U	S	E	I	G	H	T	Y	L	U	G
E	J	O	H	N	E	K	L	E	W	A	L	T	W	
L	A	R	G	R	E	O	L	E	I	O	S	R	E	E
A	R	T	H	U	R	H	A	Y	L	E	C	I	R	N
L	P	S	A	L	M	I	G	C	L	D	A	V	I	D
D	E	G	R	E	E	N	E	R	I	H	M	O	H	O
O	G	A	L	L	E	O	N	E	A	S	P	A	U	L
U	S	N	E	A	K	O	R	E	M	A	I	N	S	E
S	U	E	S	Y	P	R	O	P	O	R	T	I	O	N

Solution and Notes for No. 3449
Work or Pen Name by Mordred

The unclued lights are the first names of the authors of 12 book titles used as clues:

- 54a Jerome K. Jerome 17d Aldous Huxley
63a W. Shakespeare 19d David H. Lawrence
3d Nathaniel Hawthorne 22d Walt Whitman
4d Charles Dickens 33d Kenneth Grahame
8d John R.R. Tolkien 36d Wilkie Collins
11d Arthur Koestler 38d Paul Scott

The title is a clue to PRAENOMEN

The winner is Edward B. McConkey, of Belfast, Northern Ireland. The runners up are Stuart Williams, of Canterbury, Kent; Paul Denny, of Mold, Flintshire; P.A. Long, of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire; Bernard Grabowski, of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire; Mrs J. Walker, of Crowthorne, Berkshire.

BRIDGE

by Robert Sheehan

WHEN THE dummy holds a collection of small cards in a suit and you are sitting on declarer's right and switch to that suit, i.e. up to weakness, it is important to help your partner to judge whether to continue the suit should he win the trick. This example came up during the France v Argentina match in the 1997 Venice Cup in Tunisia.

Dealer North		Love all IMPs	
		♠ A732	
		♥ Q106	
		♦ B54	
		♣ AKJ	
♠ J84			♠ K8
♥ J85			♥ AK732
♦ KJ3			♦ 972
♣ 932			♣ 876
		♠ Q1085	
		♥ 4	
		♦ AQ108	
		♣ Q1054	

Contract Four Spades by South
Lead: (1) the Jack of hearts (2) the eight of hearts

Both Souths played in Four Spades after North had opened One Club and East-West had bid and supported hearts. The Argentine West led the Jack of hearts to the Queen and King and East switched to the two of diamonds. Declarer put in the Queen and when West won her King it was difficult for her not to return a diamond into declarer's tenace — after all, if declarer had a similar hand but with five clubs and three diamonds lacking the ten, it would be essential to establish a second diamond trick immediately. Having won the second diamond, declarer played Ace and another trump and soon had ten tricks.

At the other table the French West player led the eight of hearts (the French play "third and fifth" leads) to the ten and king. Here, however, East switched to the seven of diamonds. Again that went to the Queen and King but the high spot card had warned West not to expect her partner to hold strength in diamonds, so she switched back to hearts. Declarer ruffed and crossed to dummy with a club to play a trump towards the Queen. East went in with the King and played a second diamond. Now declarer did not have the communication to ruff a further heart in hand as well as draw trumps and cash the clubs, so she had to lose a trump and a diamond for one down.

The point of the hand is that, whatever system of leads you normally play, leading through declarer and up to weakness is a special situation and only "attitude" leads — a low card to promise a high honour and a high card to deny interest in the suit — really get the job done. Be very clear, if your defence goes, as at the first table, that it is not your partner, West, who has let through the contract but you, East, for your unhelpful two of diamonds switch.

• The Times Book of Bridge 1 by Robert Sheehan is available from bookshops or from Batsford (01370 321276), at £6.99 plus p&p £1.

WORD ANSWERS

Answers from page 40

ABEY

(a) To put in abeyance or waive. From the Old French *abeier* "to gape for, aspire to", said of the claimant. "All right of rank and place abeyed, I'll follow any of the three."

BABELISM

(b) Noisy confusion of speech, strange utterance. A toponym from Babel. "Hungry critics, with their usual acrimony and babelism."

BOANTHROPY

(c) A form of madness in which a man believes himself to be an ox. Read about Nebuchadnezzar doing it in *Daniel*, in Greek *bois* is an ox and *anthropos* a man.

man. "The exact form of the disease, which would be Boanthropy, I have not found any notice of."

BULLFIST

(d) The fungus called puffball (*Lycoperdon bovista*). "Still in use in Suffolk," Britten and Holland. "For stopping haemorrhages."

TWO BRAINS

Answers from page 40

Question 1: SPRING, SUMMER, AUTUMN, WINTER

Question 2: 49. The first minus the last Roman numeral gives the age (C-L = 50; L-V = 45; V-I = 4; L-I = 49)

CHESS

by Raymond Keene

Today, the intellectual equivalent of the Boat Race takes place afternoons at the Royal London Chess Club, Pall Mall. In the 1997-98 season, the teams from Oxford and Cambridge clash in the Varsity Chess Match. It is the oldest traditional fixture in the chess world. Of the 115 matches contested so far, Cambridge lead by 50 wins to 48 with 17 drawn encounters. The Oxford line-up is Dharshan Kumaran (Green); Jonathan Rowson (Kebab); Boyan Topkov (Jesus); Maxim Devereaux (Bras-nose); Aleksander Trifunovic (St. Anne's); Oliver Rosten (Somerville); Joel Quaknine (St. Cross); Emily Howard (Lincoln); Cambridge: Mark Ferguson (Queen's); Brian Kelly (Trinity); Harriet Hunt (St. John's); Aaron Cohen (Queen's); David Moskovic (Queen's); Jack Rudd (Girton); Ben Morgan (Magdalen); Stuart White (Jesus).

The first match was held at the City of London Chess Club in 1873. There were at least 400 spectators with world champion players and commentators such as Zukertort and Blackburne to keep them entertained by analysing the games. Among some of the intellectual giants who have represented the universities in subsequent years have been L.S. Penrose, later a professor at London University; Kingsley Martin, who went on to become editor of the *New Statesman*; astronomer Fred Hoyle and polymath Jacob Bronowski. This week's game is taken from the first match to be held after the end of the First World War.

White: V. Winter; Black: T.H. Tylor

Cambridge v Oxford 1919

Queen's Gambit Declined

1 d4 d5 2 e4 e6 3 Nc3 Nf6 4 Bg5 Nb4 5 Bxf6

A trap to avoid now is 5 cxd5 exd5 6 Nxd5 Nxd5 7 Bxd8 Bb4 when Black wins material.

5 a3 Be7 6 Nf3 0-0 7 Qc2 e5 8 Rd1 cxd4 9 Nxd4 e5

This is too slow. More chances of counterattack are afforded by 9... dxc4 10 Bxc4 Qa5.

10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Bxe7 Nxe7 Retrograde but 11... Qxe7 12 Nxd5 exd5 leaves White with a com-

manding strategic advantage with no black compensation.

12 Bxf3 f6

This is clearly bad allows White to launch a vigorous attack, stripping away the protection from around his king. After 12... Nf6, the best move, Black need not fear 13 Nxe6 Bxe6 14 Bxf7 since White surrenders too much material to win the black queen.

13 Nxe6 Bxe6 14 Bxf7 Bxf7 15 Bg5 g6 16 Bf6 Bg7 17 Rf3 Kg7 18 Ke2

A rare case when avoidance of casting further White's prospects of aggression.

18... Rf6 19 Rg3 Threatening all sorts of horrors such as Nxe6 or Rg6. If Black tries to defend with 19... Rf6 then 20 Rh1 Rxf1 21 Nxe6 is still decisive.

19... Qe6 20 Ne4 Nf6 21 Qc3!!

Black had been hoping to minimise White's aggressive chances through a policy of exchanges. However, the inspired text casts a harsh searchlight on to Black's weaknesses along the dark squares. If now 21... Nxe4 22 Nf5+ is murderous.

21... e5 22 Nf6 Qd7 23 N4f5+ Kg6 24 Nxe8 Qb5+ If 24... Rxc8 25 Rd7 Rxc3 26 Rd8+ and White wins a rook.

25 Qd3 Qxd3+ 26 Rxd3 Rxd3 27 Ne7+ Kg7 28 Nxe8 Rxe8 29 Rf3 Ne4 30 Rh4 Black resigns.

After 30... f5 31 f3 or 30... Rg2+ 31 Kd1 Rg2 32 Ke1 33 Rd1 34 Kd1 Nxe2 35 Ke2 and the knight is trapped.

WINNING MOVES

WHITE to play. This position is from the game Ramos - Prado, Cuba 1997.

White's winning move in this position demonstrated some neat tactical themes. What was it?

The first correct answer drawn on Thursday will win a year's subscription to the Staunton Society. Answers, on a postcard please, addressed to Winning Move competition, The Times, Pennington Street, London E1 9XN.

The answer will be published next Saturday.

Solution to last week's competition: 1 Rb8.

The winner is T. Taylor, of Lake, Isle of Wight.

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

a b c d e f g h

COMPUTER GAMES AND PASTIMES

by Tim Wapshott



The Tate Gallery's Bonnard exhibition is now on the Web

worth Kelly and Howard Hodgkin.

The Bonnard section includes a guide to the exhibition. This text is also available in French. Elsewhere at this slick site are quick overviews of the Tate's venues in London, St Ives and Liverpool, each with opening times. The Tate Library has more than 120,000 exhibition catalogues and a rich archive department and offers extensive coverage of 20th-century art, especially after the Second World War. This library can be accessed online via the site between 10am and 5pm, from Monday to Friday.

The most delicious feature, which will be operating shortly, will be the ability to call up 3,500

images from the Oppé Collection. Later, the General Collection and new acquisitions will be included. Pictures are in colour, fairly small, but gratifying nonetheless. To complete your virtual visit to the Tate site, you can join the Friends scheme, make mail-order purchases from the Tate Shop with a credit card and sign the visitors' book. The Tate Gallery Web site is: <http://www.tate.org.uk>

THIS IS the last call for Cyberspace Forty One which closes on Tuesday. We have £2,000 worth of Hewlett Packard palmtops on offer. First prize is an HP 620LX, an £800 palmtop with impressive features including a backlit colour display, 16Mb of RAM, Windows CE 2.0 preloaded, AC adaptor, rechargeable battery pack, synch cable and docking station for desktop PC linking.

The two runners-up prizes are HP 320LX packages each worth £600. These have 16-grey-scale backlit screens and 8Mb of RAM but otherwise the same additions as their big brother. Pull-down menus in Windows CE 2.0 are activated with the stylus and touch-sensitive screen and make it easy to organise yourself on the move.

Cyberspace Forty One is in two parts. First, you must come up with a suitable competition idea for this column — but, not based around any particular prize. Competition entries can only be in a written form, so suggestions requiring drawings, for example, cannot be accepted. Your idea should be witty, humorous or entertaining and have a wide appeal. If possible, it should also accommodate readers of all ages. The judges will award marks for originality and ingenuity.

The second part of the competition is to explain, in 50 words at most, where in the world you would most like to use a Hewlett Packard palmtop and why. Cyberspace Forty is open to all readers. If you are 16 or younger, please give your age.

Send your entries, with your name, address and telephone number, to Cyberspace Forty One, Computer Games & Pastimes, Weekend, The Times, Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. You can also enter by e-mail, as long as it is clearly identified as a Cyberspace Forty-One entry with the above inclusions, at cyber@dircon.co.uk. Normal Times competition rules apply.

NEW SOFTWARE

THE Monty Python team briefly reformed to record some new material for the latest CD-Rom spin-off from the genre, Monty Python's The Meaning of Life.

To my knowledge this is the third Monty Python computer game during the past seven years and it is by far the best of a poor bunch.

Take 2s title is a mix of Python film clips and animations, old and new. The game kicks off with the opening titles of the Python film of the same name, released in 1983. To discover the meaning of life for yourself you must explore seven routes, including Birth, Fighting Each Other, Live Organ Transplants and Death.

First fall is an empty operating theatre, into which John Cleese and Graham Chapman burst to perform a birth. Clicking on hot-spots moves the event along, by installing playing medical equipment, then introducing the unfortunate mum-to-be. The action is played out in jerky photo-realistic animations.

The game is but a minor diversion, despite coming on two discs. It has a few genuinely funny moments, but not enough. The title suffers from the same problem as re-runs of the vintage BBC television series: the humour now seems stale.

Verdict: 7 out of 10. Last laughs being squeezed from the Python brand. £34.99.

WE British love our food, which is why Della Smith and Kenneth Horn know they can dash off a cookery-book best seller any time they please.

While it may be easy enough to follow recipes in open books, it is



Monty Python: third game

not so simple when that book is on the desktop computer in another room. So, cookery-book software titles have to offer something more.

The recent Europress title, The Tastes of Italy, does much more than merely offer a few tasty recipes with written instructions and colour pictures.

The title boasts more than 100 authentic Italian dishes, with easy-to-follow video demonstrations for their preparation.

The title's trimmings add value and appeal to the double-disc package. There is a comprehensive guide to pasta, informative pages about suitable wines to accompany certain dishes and which coffee and olive oil to opt for if you want to get your dining experience just right. Italian traditions, culture and etiquette also are explored.

Two more titles in the series are expected to be released next month, A Taste of France and A Taste of Japan.

I'm especially looking forward to the latter, to find out how sushi is cooked.

Verdict: 8 out of 10. Delicious learns-to-cook Italian tutorial. £19.99.

SOLUTION TO JUMBO 152

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MODERN MANNERS

by John Morgan

Send your queries to Morgan's Modern Manners, The Times, Weekend, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN

Q A friend invited me to a family lunch at a local restaurant. Having a dislike of heavy lunches, I ate frugally and drank abstemiously, but my companions ate and drank copiously. To my surprise, I was not consulted on the choice of wines, nor shown the bill, which was settled by my friend's brother. I was a little taken aback when told that the bill for seven was to be divided equally among three adults, of whom I was one. A gentle hint that I should like to see the bill was disregarded. My own view on the sharing of restaurant bills is that, though gentlemen may vie for the honour of buying the wine, no one need expect to subsidise the appetite of others. Was I the victim of gross discourtesy, or could I be misinterpreting an unbalanced gesture of friendship? — William Dixon Smith, Acorn, York

A I am afraid this is a case of pay up and shut up. It would have been thoughtful of someone to have noticed that you had eaten and drunk comparatively little, and thus let you off paying towards the tip. But as such an offer was not forthcoming, for you to have made an issue of it would have appeared churlish.

Q Later this year I am getting married, and although I am certain of my choice of a best man, I am unsure whether to send him an invitation as a guest. — D. Challinor, Earlston, Lancs

A The best man should be sent an invitation not only because he is a guest, but also as a memento of an important day where he plays a vital role.

Q Some associates have a habit of finishing every sentence with a direct look accompanied by a large grin and a pause in the conversation; as a way of demanding my acknowledgement of what they have been saying. This is fair enough if it is a pertinent point, however, if it is a neutral point or if I wish to reserve my opinion until later, I feel I am being coerced into agreeing. Are you able to offer an acceptable way of discouraging this behaviour? — Name and address withheld.

A Cleverly considered facial gestures should do the trick. Next time you find yourself in one of these pregnant pauses, let your eyes momentarily lose direct contact with the other person by glancing to one side. At the same time allow a small but casual smile to creep across your face. Should this not work, then fall back on lightly changing the subject.

Q As you suggested in a recent column, I am going to have visiting cards printed. But I have

two queries. If I attach a card to a present in an envelope, do I need to write anything on it? Secondly, I also have a home in France. Should I put the London address and the Paris address on the same card? — Name and address supplied.

A The back of the card can be used for writing any short and relevant message or greetings ranging from "Happy birthday" to "I love you". Some people even use these cards as miniature invitations and write on the back social instructions such as "Drinks: March 12, 6.30pm". As far as showing your twin addresses, the principal one should go on the bottom left-hand side and the second one should appear on the bottom right-hand side. If you are feeling super-indulgent, you could have a set for each country.

Q You once criticised someone who attended parties without ever giving one himself. In another situation, a couple in a new neighbourhood kindly invited everyone around to get to know each other, only for this to result in reciprocal parties going on ever since. Some people attended initially just to be sociable, but they neither really like nor perhaps can afford to contribute to an endless round of drinks parties, and would rather maintain a

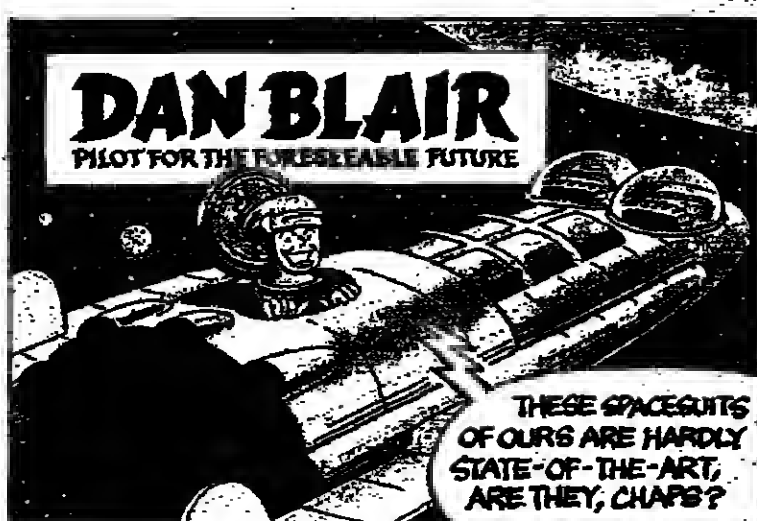
friendship in more modest ways. What should they do without upsetting anyone? — P Warner, Newbury, Berks.

A They should ensure that they are always the most wonderful guests. At other people's gatherings they should make an enormous effort to be the life and soul of the party and offer to help out. Afterwards they should send exquisitely written thank-you letters and/or lovely bunches of flowers as a sign of their appreciation. Soon they will have a reputation for being such consummate social animals that people will almost forget that they never actually give parties themselves.

Q When we visit an old friend, a parson, grace is always said before a meal. When he lunches with us, should we say grace — out of respect for his custom — or should we, and our other guests, just back into the food as we would all do normally? — Name and address withheld.

A Do him the honour of inviting him to say grace himself by adding something to the effect: "I'm afraid we are rather an ungodly lot here and don't often say grace before meals, but would love it if you could do us the honour today."

• The author is Associate Editor of GQ



WORD WATCHING

by Philip Howard

ABEY

- a. To put in abeyance
- b. A Moroccan chieftain
- c. A suffragan abbot

BABELISM

- a. Childishness
- b. Confused noise
- c. Spasmodic tics

BOANTHROPY

- a. Cowlike behaviour
- b. Charity to the sick
- c. Unnatural hairiness

BULLFIST

- a. A puffball
- b. A matador's pass
- c. A class of yacht

Answers on page 39

TWO BRAINS

by Raymond Keene

IN 1879 in Virginia in the US, Thomas Fuller (aged 79) calculated mentally the number of seconds elapsed in any given time period. For example, for 70 years, 17 days and 12 hours the correct answer was given in one and a half minutes: 2,210,500,800 (assuming a 365 1/4 day year).

A copy of tough puzzles is available from BEAP, Glenhorne House, Hammanth Grove, London W6 0LG.

Question 1: "TIMES RUNNING FAST" WE MURMUR is an anagram of four words connected to each other and the sentence. What are the words?

Question 2: If Charles is 50, Sylvester is 45 and Kevin is 4, how old is Louise?

Answers on page 39

CROSS WORDS

by Brian Greer

I described earlier how Sym-pathy simplifies grid construction and throws up interesting words. Now I am exploring *Crossword Compiler*, available from its author Antony Lewis, 16 Townley Rd, London SE22 8SR. When I used its "autofill" facility to generate ten standard grids, the resultant words showed satisfactory variation, with a good ratio of less common letters. However, in each grid there were a few obscure words that I would rule out, such as *pseudophedrine*, *occlusal*, *esophagi* (the latter being an American spelling, that, curiously, turned up twice in the first five grids). For now I believe that my current method of filling

in the grid interactively, using software to list options available at each stage, suits me best.

Crossword Compiler has many more helpful features, such as a wide variety of grid types (e.g. French-style grids in which the clues are numbered using a co-ordinate system). Of more practical use to the mainstream compiler are the facilities for writing, editing, and printing clues, and constructing clue databases. For any completed grid, statistics are available such as the mean word length and the letters used (a useful check for our pangrammatist). One aid that I may find useful is the facility to enter a word and view its multi-word anagrams. Trying

INTERACTIVE, for example, I got a long list beginning CREATIVE NIT and ending TARTIC VEE IN. My initial reaction is that I am not convinced that it affords a great advantage over the low-tech method of moving Scrabble letters around by hand.

Such software does efficiently the parts of the job that computers can reach. The hard creative part remains the writing of elegant and amusing clues. I lose no sleep worrying that computers will be doing that in my lifetime — though the attempt would represent an appropriate challenge for the Artificial Intelligence.

The writer is Crossword Editor of The Times

PICTURE LINE



READERS are invited to suggest what Lord Archer of Weston-super-Mare and Dame Edna Everage might be saying to one another.

This picture, recently printed in *The Times*, will appear again next week with an entry chosen from those submitted.

Send "speech bubble" suggestions on a postcard with your name and address to PictureLine, Weekend, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN. The closing date for entries is Wednesday, March 11.



QUOTES OF THE WEEK

"Let their friendship stand as a symbol of the peace process." — Tony Blair on the shooting by loyalist gunmen of best friends Damien Trainor, a Catholic, and Philip Allen, a Protestant, at Pointzpass in Co. Armagh

"You're not talking about something down at the DIY store." — The Lord Chancellor describing his new £300-a-roll wallpaper

"It was only £5,000." — Officials refusing

reports that Farms Minister Jack Cunningham's new desk cost £10,000

"It seems nothing is sacred where European regulations are concerned, not even the body and blood of Christ." — from L'Avvenire, the Italian Catholic daily, on an EU plan to introduce sell-by dates for communion wafers

"I just regret that our people weren't more forthright about it at the very beginning

when I was with them." — Rupert Murdoch, chairman and chief executive of the News Corporation — which owns The Times and publishers HarperCollins — on the decision not to publish Chris Patten's book on China.

"We hope Mr Howell will accept the invitation as the party will be outside." — Buckingham Palace spokesman after a guest was injured by falling plaster during an honours presentation

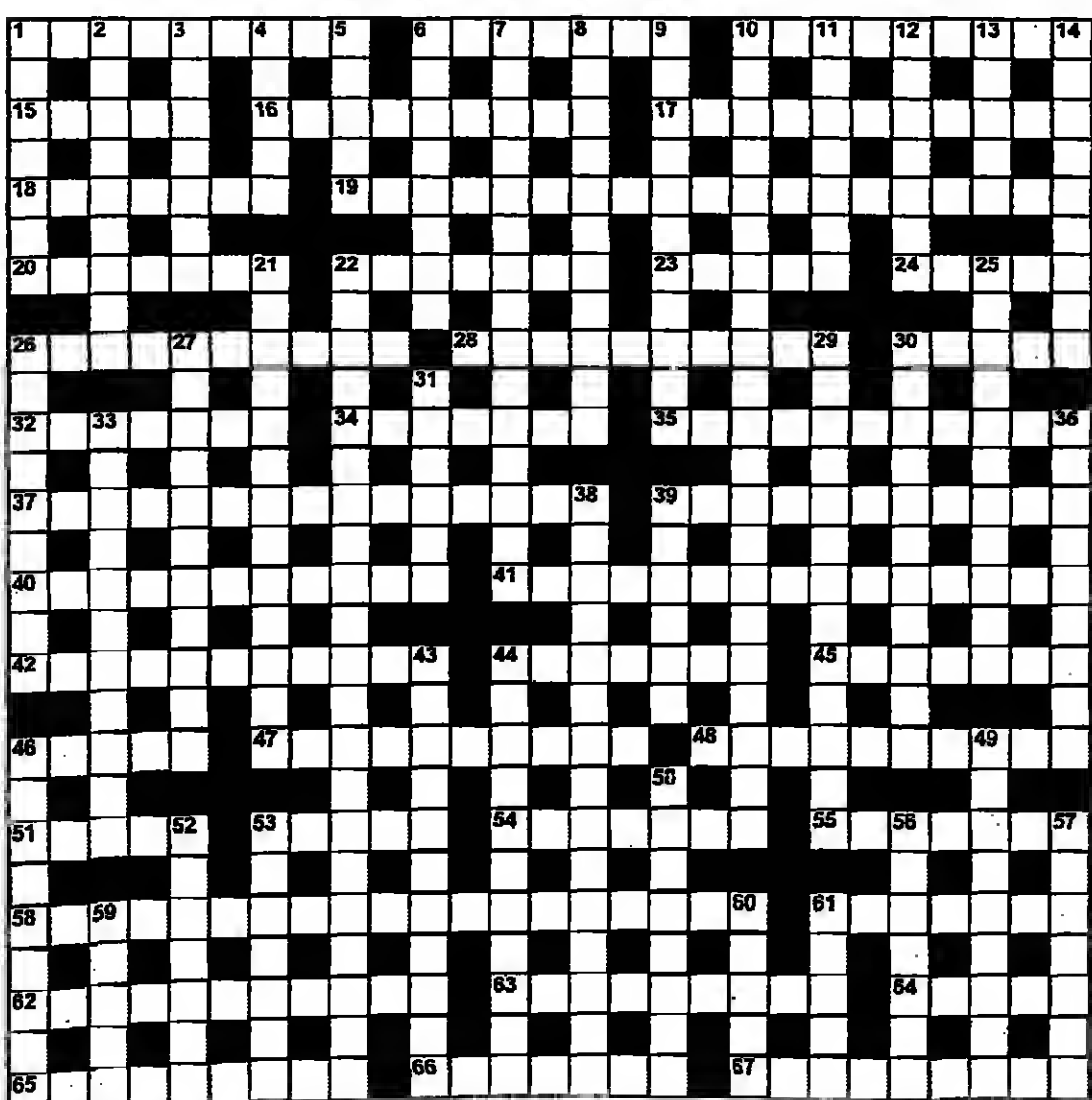
"So the Universe began as a tiny particle. Would Professor Hawking explain... this particle got there?" — Letter to Times

"Got where?" — Subsequent letter to The Times

"He was a kind of comedic meteor." — Fellow actor Frank Kelly on the late Dermot "Father Ted" Morgan

JUMBO CROSSWORD 154

The prize for the first correct solution to be opened will be an Alfred Dunhill AD2000, worth £125, the world's first interchangeable, capless rollerball/ballpoint pen. Streamlined and made from black resin with a gold-plated clip, it has perfect writing balance. Entries should be sent to: Jumbo Crossword 154, The Times, 1 Pennington Street, London E1 9XN to arrive by Thursday, March 19. The name of the winner will be published in Weekend on March 21



NAME

ADDRESS

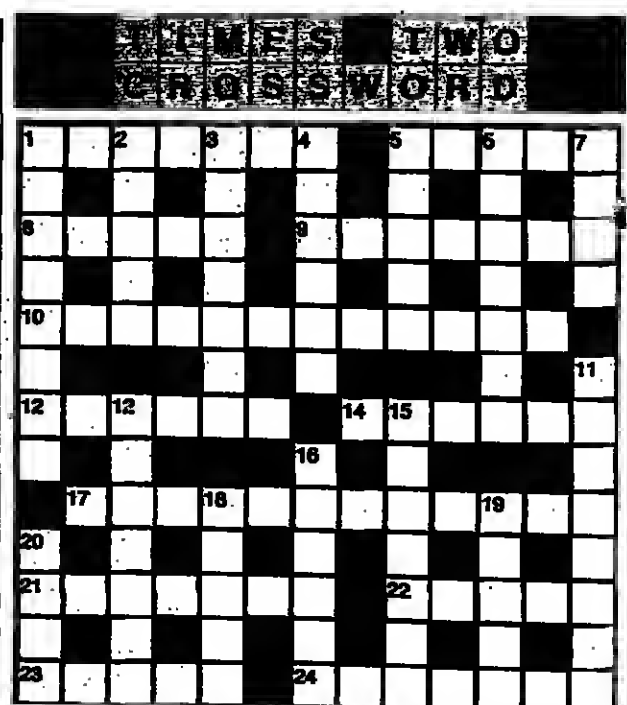
POSTCODE

ACROSS

- 1 Company hiding account — fraudulent racket (9)
- 6 Black cat daughter threw out (7)
- 10 I caught a cold, one caught in congregation — vitamin needed (5,4)
- 15 Portrayed looking strained (5)
- 16 Outside venue suitable for afternoon service maybe (3,6)
- 17 Unlikely to be diminished, not to be put down by the psychiatrist (6,5)
- 18 Extended flight to make delivery welcomed by recipient (4,3)
- 19 Bristly types arriving on the scene produce results (3,6,5,5)
- 20 Pauline boy involved in a racket (7)
- 22 Bigwig much favoured gets wounded (7)
- 23 Wader in water getting thrust back (5)
- 24 Stand-in office worker, one for the "Musical Times" (5)
- 26 Early during a purple patch (2,4,4)
- 28 Meat dish may appear to be stewed beef (10)
- 30 Very wicked person lacking the right style (5)
- 32 Clairvoyant about to stop working, feeling less well (7)
- 34 Raise English tax to keep the French — the ultimate in injustice (7)
- 35 Concerned with being in tune with Kierkegaard? (11)
- 37 When a time comes down immediately (2,3,4,2,1,3)
- 39 I grin at fun — I can be misreading (11)
- 40 At home trying to absorb school subject — it helps if it's this (11)
- 41 New public notice? Look at green one with people in group (15)
- 42 Rumer provides products I can sell (11)
- 44 State of chaos in a foreign port (7)
- 45 Criminal accomplice in Lincoln, time and time again getting gold (7)
- 46 New worker on land about to start on harvesting (5)
- 47 Convinced, Celia's got to reform, I admitted (10)
- 48 One married foreign fighter, highly regarded, came to live here (10)
- 51 In fact, editor exerted influence (5)
- 53 Way Head of Marketing establishes a device for communications (5)
- 54 Anger shown by boy around the north, in a "green" area? (7)
- 55 Clear task to produce an interconnected organisation (7)
- 58 Partners in a very powerful son et lumière (7,3,9)
- 61 Cold bread? (4,3)
- 62 Man in a ship's sailing round Caribbean Sea (7,4)
- 63 Icon touring the East with fashion that's not very visionary (9)
- 64 Fuss about new circular painting (5)
- 65 Walk behind, having grabbed little lot, primarily for coaxing (5,4)
- 66 Architectural device used in pediment, as I suspected (7)

DOWN

- 67 Long sentence — way of writing showing set of attitudes, etc (9)
- 1 Character under some foreign seas, we hear? (7)
- 2 Labour offers little comfort for these workers in union (5,4)
- 3 Longed to have companion ended and squeezed (7)
- 4 Available out of the barrel (2,3)
- 5 Long time before appearance of knight (5)
- 6 To make allowances for childish person and funny guy — that's hard (4,4)
- 7 Orbiting astronaut isn't so out of sorts (5,3,7)
- 8 Soldier is crazier, going into road bollard (11)
- 9 Separate beds, and I am less wriggly (11)
- 10 Cave can be useful when trouble arises (10,2,9)
- 11 Little man that is not heartless is merciful (7)
- 12 Mimic PC, and finally annoy spiteful woman (7)
- 13 Drug chattering round hospital block (5)
- 14 Protecting English marshes, get submerged around the periphery (9)
- 21 Character has residence going into protected area of land (6,7)
- 22 Extended version of play associated with small community? (6,6,2,7)
- 25 Splendid periodical has poem put in pleasing set of books (11)
- 26 Establishing in street a receptacle for collection — good (9)
- 27 Girl joins local division to bring token of reconciliation (5,6)
- 29 Resolute making legal decision (13)
- 30 Good time for drink — a gin, tea, very possibly! (7,4)
- 31 What obscures one's vision, in the main (3,3)
- 33 The conferring of an honour seen, as right? (11)
- 36 Bound to have enticed, hiding one piece, perhaps (9)
- 38 Turn's fouled up, Mum? Scottish loch is the essence of clarity (15)
- 39 Where the way is clear is maintained, to no avail (2,4)
- 43 Blame screen for obscuring likeness (11)
- 44 Record associated with a poster (7,4)
- 46 Musicians rendering notes around us, keeping it up (9)
- 49 What rare and expensive items aren't available from act pay now? (3,1,5)
- 50 A shell in vehicle could be source of disease (8)
- 52 Father, very good and holy man, was unconventional artistic type (7)
- 53 Drug brings additional worry, mostly spelling (7)
- 55 Understood American historian (7)
- 57 An opening for one wishing to do surgery? (7)
- 59 Edict as conveyed by peer losing head (5)
- 60 Librarian's first to support dynamic Russian writer (5)
- 61 Bundle female found under nut tree (5)



No 1347

ACROSS

- 1 Natural environment (7)
- 5 Footwear: hotel employee once (5)
- 8 Be king (5)
- 9 Unvarying placid (7)
- 10 Desperately vital (matter) (4,3,5)
- 12 Withdraw (from political union) (6)
- 14 Johannes — laws-of-motion discoverer (6)
- 17 Disassemble (4,2,6)
- 21 Short axe (7)
- 22 Paperwork (5)
- 23 Stains; notices (5)
- 24 Type of jacket: Sir Winston — Churchill (7)

DOWN

- 1 Innocuous (8)
- 2 Short advice (5)
- 3 Beer mug (7)
- 4 With-it (6)
- 5 Robert the — Lemmy —, US comedian (5)
- 6 Electron's path (7)
- 7 A canal: 1956 debacle (4)
- 11 One in confinement (8)
- 13 Division of book (7)
- 15 Type of Muslim country (7)
- 16 Developed embryo (6)
- 18 Characteristic spirit (5)
- 19 Funny man (5)
- 20 Feigned (4)

SOLUTION TO NO 1346

ACROSS: 1 Hump 3 Brickbat 8 Marvel 10 Relax 11 Split second 13 Chimax 15 Borgia 17 Kick up a fuss 20 Whiff 21 Shelter 22 Dogberry 23 Serf

DOWN: 1 Homesick 2 Mural 4 Relief 5 Corroborate 6 Bulldog 7 Taxi 9 Entrance fee 12 Sanscrit 14 Inkling 16 Parser 18 Udder 19 Owed

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